

In the Aftermath – Chapter 1

My boss, Seth, and his wife Naomi had invited Rose and me up to Lake Arrowhead for Christmas. I was a bit leery at first because Seth and Naomi are Jewish and I presumed that they celebrate Hanukkah instead of Christmas. I mentioned my concern to Seth and he laughed. Then he lectured me on Jewish Christians.

“Jewish Christians” today are persons who are ethnically Jewish but who have become part of a “mainstream” Christian group, which is not predominantly based on an appeal to Jewish ethnicity or the Law of Moses. This term is used as a contrast to Messianic Jews, a majority of whom are ethnic Jews who have converted to a religion in which Christian belief (often of a very evangelical nature) is generally engrafted onto Jewish ritual which would, to outsiders at least, typically resemble Judaism more than Christianity.

There are important similarities and differences between “Jewish Christians” (or “Hebrew Christians”) and “Messianic Jews”. Jewish Christians identify themselves primarily as Christians. They are (mostly) members of Protestant and Catholic congregations, (usually) are not so strict about observing kosher or the Sabbath, and are (generally) assimilated culturally into the Christian mainstream, although they retain a strong sense of their Jewish identity, which they, like Messianic Jews, strongly desire to pass on to their children. In Israel, there is a growing number of Orthodox Christians who are of Jewish descent and conduct their worship mostly in Hebrew. Messianic Jews consider their primary identity to be “Jewish” and belief in Jesus to be the logical conclusion of their “Jewishness”. They try to structure their worship according to Jewish norms, they circumcise their sons and (mostly) abstain from non-kosher foods, and (often) observe the Sabbath. Many (but by no means all) do not use the label “Christian” to describe themselves. The boundary between the two movements is blurred; because of the differences between the two movements, it is not fair to treat them as one, any more than one would treat Baptists and Methodists as a single entity, for example.

This doesn't have much to do with what happened, but when I sat down to record the events, I thought that I should include everything. Christmas 2006 was the same as Christmas every other year and was on December 25th. Last year, the media didn't have a lot of news to report and they were hammering on the fact that some businesses had taken Christ out of Christmas. Even the President and Mrs. Bush had economized and sent a Christmas Card to 1.5 million people that said ‘Happy Holidays.’

There are 2 times every year when most of us renew our Christian faith, Easter and Christmas. On the 25th of December, we celebrate His birth and around Passover, in the spring, His death and resurrection. The rest of the year, we study His teachings and listen to the Pastor tell us what it all means. If you been to church once, you know and if not, why not?

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December 25th 2006 was on a Monday. The invitation was to come up on Friday, December 22 and spend the weekend. There's just Rose and me, Diane is grown and married and living in Pueblo, Colorado. We live in Lancaster and to get to their cabin, we took state 138 down to state 18 and over to Lakes Edge Road and on through Blue Jay to their cabin. They weren't right on the Lake, but you could see it from their front porch.

I'm Seth's Assistant Manager in his business, Rim of the World Preparedness. I think maybe he got the name from the name of Highway 18. We deal in the usual survival and preparedness supplies, MRE's, equipment, gas masks and the like. One of the items we sell is a 72-hour BOB that Seth gave everyone for Christmas one year. Long before California went crazy and outlawed half of the guns in the world, I had a pretty impressive gun collection. I spent a lot of money in North Ridge at Sherwood Gun Shop. Right next door was another gun shop, I forget the name and they're both long gone, and they got a piece of the action.

I got out of the Air Force after 20, my last tour was at Edwards AFB, and went to work with Seth. The business was located in Canyon County, now called Santa Clarita. We had a storefront but most of our business came over the Internet. We had a computer geek, Eddie, who ran a server and we were connected to the Internet by a T-1 line. Most of the building was a warehouse where we stored goods and packed and shipped orders.

Business had been brisk, the world was in a sorry state and I think people were worried. There was the avian flu scare, Homeland Security was talking about another terrorist plot they'd stopped and New Orleans was still a mess from the year before. The winter of 2005-2006 had been tough on the Midwest and the Northeast. We were shipping N-95 and N-100 masks by the case and people were buying MREs. Seth had assembled a 'home protection kit' that consisted of a large roll of plastic and 4 rolls of duct tape. Good item this fall. The website had all of the Homeland Security recommendations and we carried a range of trauma kits.

We'd been to their cabin any number of times and the basement was filled with supplies from the shop. Seth implied they were his backup supplies in case something became hard to get, but not once in the time I'd worked there had we ever gone to Arrowhead to pick up something we were out of. If you ask me, it was his personal stash and he had things there we didn't carry at the store. Seth had 2 Fort Knox Gun Safes and a couple of years back, he showed me the contents. And, I thought I had a lot of guns!

I asked and he said he had 10,000-rounds for every long arm and 2,000-rounds for every handgun. The most I had was ammo for my HK91s, 5,000-rounds for each of the 2 rifles. I suppose my gun collection fell into categories; I had my military arms, my police type weapons and my cowboy guns. In the military category, I had the 2 HK91s, 2 sniper rifles, a Springfield Armory Super Match with a pair of scopes and Harris bipod, and a McMillan Tac-50 with all the whistles and bells, including night vision (MUNS) and suppressor (Jet titanium), .50BMG, also with a pair of scopes. For handguns, I had a pair of

Kimber Custom TLE/RL IIs. As far as the law enforcement weapons went, I had a pair of Remington 11-87P shotguns in 12-gauge and a pair of .357 magnum S&W revolvers. I guns I loved the best were my cowboy guns.

My rifle was a .45 Colt model 94 and Rose's was a .357 magnum. I had 2 revolvers, a 7½" and a 4¾", both genuine Colt SAA in .45 Colt. Rose's revolver was a Colt SAA in .357 magnum. We bought our leather in Burbank from Alfonso. We both had the A4 James Arness rigs and I had a shoulder holster for my short-barreled Colt. It was the C93 holster Val Kilmer wore in Tombstone. By the way, neither of us rides, so that fact that I had rifle scabbards was strictly for show. There was a 4th category, hunting guns that included 12-gauge and 20-gauge Remington 870 Express combos, a pair of Marlin 39A rifles and a pair of S&W model 617 .22LR 10-shot revolvers with 6" barrels.

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"Do you have any idea what time Rose and you will get up to Arrowhead tomorrow?"

"Maybe 2pm, is that ok?"

"Sure, but could you do me a favor?"

"Probably, what do you want?"

"I'd like to see your gun collection, Joe. I've heard you talk about it several times, but I've never had a chance to see it."

"All you had to do was drive to Lancaster."

"Never had time. Bring all of your guns and any accessories, you might have."

"Ammo too?"

"Maybe not all of it, but enough so we can do some shooting. Don't worry about it; I supply you with replacement ammo."

"Rose will raise holy hell when I start loading guns into the SUV."

"Tell her that you're just humoring me. You really should be better prepared, I think the only thing you have is that BOB I gave you for Christmas in 2004."

"Not so, oh, wise one. I bought 10 cases of MREs, a Katelyn water filter and a top line trauma bag."

"I won't believe that until I see it with my own eyes."

"I'm not hauling 10 cases of MREs."

“Fair enough, bring the trauma bag and I’ll believe you.”

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“What are you doing?” Rose asked.

“Loading the guns and our supplies into the SUV.”

“Why?”

“Blame Seth, he wanted to see our entire gun collection and then kidded me about our not being prepared. That sort of irked me so I decided I show him exactly what we have. I’m taking everything we have in the way of survival supplies. The ammo, the MREs, the Trauma Bag, the water filter and the guns and cases.”

“You old goat, you’re doing a whole lot of work for nothing. What is it with men and their Toys?”

“I think we all wanted to be Hopalong Cassidy when we were kids.”

Boy Toys? A Harley Davidson is a Boy Toy but I can’t see how she could classify a gun collection as a Boy Toy. A Ford Shelby Cobra may be a Boy Toy, but how can you call a 2006 Lincoln Navigator 4x4 Ultimate with the Elite package, a Warn winch and after-market auxiliary fuel tank a Boy Toy? For the price, I suppose I could have bought a real Boy Toy. I get about 16mpg on the road and I carry 28 gallons in the tank and another 28 in the auxiliary. No way was I going to pull the 6.5kw genset just to prove a point.

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“Do you have everything?”

“I didn’t take the generator, but I loaded everything else.”

“Here take this and put it anywhere you can find room.”

“What is it?”

“A Christmas present for Seth and Naomi.” Bog boxes!

“Mind telling me what we got them?”

“You’ll see.”

“It had started to snow, lightly, in Lancaster and by the time I got to Phelan, I kicked in the 4WD. That’s a mean stretch of road between Phelan and I-15. Once we got to I-15, I

went straight ahead instead of turning south on the Interstate. It looked like we'd miss out on a White Christmas in Lancaster. The Antelope Valley seems to get about one good snowstorm a year and the equipment the cities and LA County have to deal with it is painfully thin. With any kind of luck, they might have the streets cleared by Wednesday, 2 days after Christmas.

I'm really not all that familiar with the Lake Arrowhead area. Other than the occasional visit to Seth and Naomi's cabin, we never went down there. They lived in the Sand Canyon area of Santa Clarita, but Seth had his cabin in the mountains before I met him. They spent summer vacation and every holiday up at Arrowhead. The cabin was one of those log homes you see advertised from time to time. It was very spacious and no doubt Seth had made a lot of money over the years selling survival supplies. He had a propane fueled 15kw backup generator with a 1,800-rpm engine and a 3,000-gallon tank of propane. We were an hour late arriving because of the roads.

"Get lost?"

"No, the road went south on me and I had to switch to 4WD and drive slow from Phelan."

"I figured as much, aren't you glad you bought the Boy Toy?"

"Et tu, Brute?"

"Rose giving you a bad time about the Navigator?"

"Rose was giving me a bad time about loading all of our survival supplies in back. The only thing I didn't bring was our generator. You implied that I wasn't prepared and I wanted you to see what we have. Feel free to comment on anything you think I missed."

"Pull your SUV into the spare space in the garage and let's take a look."

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"You'll get mighty sick of MREs. What you should do is buy one of those food deals from Walton Feed, enough for the 2 of you for a year. They don't take a lot of space and the only things you need to add are oil and sugar."

"Any other criticisms?"

"You don't have any radiation detection equipment."

"Only a madman would start a nuclear war."

"I agree. You have 10 cases of MREs, that's 120 meals, enough for the 2 of you for 60 days, assuming you eat light. If we did have a nuclear war, you might need to shelter for 100 days, what are you going to live on?"

"I don't believe we'll have a nuclear war in the first place. And even if we did, I don't have a shelter so it doesn't make a whole lot of difference, Seth."

"Sometimes, you're a very silly man, Joe. You only have minimal ammo and I don't see anything to deal with radiation. You're short on food and I don't see a prescription for Tamiflu."

"I asked, but the doctor declined to write a prescription unless we were actually sick."

"Well, I don't like it, not one damned bit. I wasn't sure what we were going to give Rose and you for Christmas, but now I know. I have spares of a lot of the things you're missing. I must say that I like your weapons collection, but why 2 calibers in the cowboy guns?"

"A .357 magnum has about the same power as a .45 Colt. But it has the advantage of shooting .38 special and most of the time Rose prefers to shoot the lower powered ammo."

"It makes sense in a distant sort of way. The problem with that is you have a mix of ammo, .38 Special and .357 magnum. It would be better if she just became accustomed to the .357 magnum."

"Right, you tell her. I had enough trouble just to get her into shooting to begin with."

"You married a sheeple?"

"Back when we got married the term wasn't in vogue, Seth. Rose considers guns to be Boy Toys."

"Have you been paying much attention to the economy?"

"Just what they report in the papers, gold is hovering around \$600 an ounce. I don't see that we're in a recession, sales have been good this year."

"Ah, sales. Best year I ever had. But think about that, we sell survival supplies. Doesn't that suggest to you that a lot of people are concerned?"

"I can't deny that, now can I?"

"Bush and Rumsfeld reduced the troops in Iraq to fewer than 100,000, but I believe they were simply submitting to public pressure. And Rumsfeld was out on the 18th. Homeland Security is a joke, but it isn't very funny. They couldn't even handle a hurricane. For the

first time in history, Air Marshals shot a guy who claimed he had a bomb and they were roasted over the coals. What do you think would happen to this country if we really had a major terrorist event? What would happen if we really had an avian flu pandemic? I can tell you, people would panic and they'd blame everyone from God on down because they weren't prepared. It would be everyone's fault but theirs."

"So what are you going to do for a shelter, Seth? Some kind of improvised shelter in the basement?"

"Improvised? Is that the way I strike you, Joe? As a man who would improvise?"

"I didn't mean anything bad by my remark, but I've never seen any sign of you having a shelter."

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Seth led me to the basement and walked over to a cabinet that he used to store medical supplies and opened it. He pushed on a latch and the cabinet sprang away from the wall about 2". He closed the doors to the cabinet and pulled it open to reveal a door. I'll be damned, it was a door like on a vault. He turned the dial and swung the door open without saying a single word. He motioned I should follow him. It was a well-lit stair that descended about 2 full flights, 16'. At the bottom was another of those vault doors. He opened it and bade me enter.

"Have a look around, Joe. It's your turn to critique and you can tell me anything that you think I missed."

"How thick are the walls?"

"One foot of reinforced concrete."

"How big is this shelter?"

"Same size as my basement, the interior dimension is 44' long by 36' wide. It's covered by 16' of heavily compacted earth. The radiation protection factor is high, 10 to the 12th power, without counting the protection factor of the concrete."

"I'm impressed. I assume you have a storage room?"

"Behind the kitchen, and it has enough of the food from Walton for 8 people for 2 full years in addition to 2 25ft³ freezers full of meat that has been vacuum packed and is rated good for 4 full years. In the basement upstairs is enough more Walton food for 2 more years for 8 people. I have a complete communications setup with a pair of radios, a primary and a backup. I bought one of those Kenwood AREC Kits, they have a mobile radio, 6 2-meter HT's and a pair of FreeTalk HTs for the family channels. I have antennas on masts. It's all remotely controlled from my radio shack. My garage is a Faraday

Cage so any vehicle parked in it is protected against EMP. I'm in the business and if I don't epitomize the truly well prepared individual, no one does. Besides, I got most of the stuff at cost."

"You know my boss gives us an employee discount that's pretty close to cost and that's why I have as much stuff as I do, Seth," I chuckled.

"Your boss also has a bonus program that you don't know anything about, Joe. You've always complained when the bonus was smaller than you expected, but I only gave you half of your bonus. I put the remainder away for you in the safe in gold."

"You don't say, how much do I have?"

"You understand that I bought the gold for \$300 an ounce several years ago, right? I wrote it off as bonuses when I bought it and always carried it at \$300 an ounce. Whatever I paid you in bonuses, you have the same amount in gold at \$300 an ounce. I can't keep track of what I pay everyone so if you don't know, neither do I without looking."

"Funny I never saw any packages of gold in the safe."

"Right, I didn't say which safe."

"I didn't know you had more than one."

"I have the one at the office and the one in this shelter. Your gold is in this shelter and it is probably safer here than in a bank."

"Seth, more than once we could have used that money, you know."

"Of course, but if I'd given it to you you'd have spent it. You compare your bonus with what anyone else received working for me or with like business firms. The bonus you received in your hands was more than most firms pay. But, you were a valuable asset to the firm and I decided a long time ago to put away a little extra for you. I'm glad now that I did; I think it's going to come in very handy in the very near future. You gave me one thing money can't buy, loyalty. You're aware that we got a shelter in from a vendor right?"

"I couldn't find any record of a customer ordering that shelter."

"No one did. I ordered it to put in at your place in Lancaster. Our accountant says that we could buy and install a shelter as a demonstration site. Once we have it installed in your place, we're going to start marketing the shelters."

"That's a fancy one; it has all the bells and whistles."

“We have to be able to show potential customers what’s available. We’re going to pull the permits and install it 10’ deep because it is 10’ in diameter. It has several built-ins including LUWA System and a 10kw generator. There’s only one condition, Rose has to be available to show it if we have a customer who wants to see it.”

“Cheap at twice the price.”

“I had them put in some things that couldn’t go in after it was assembled, I hope you don’t mind.”

“Like what?”

“That kitchenette isn’t standard and neither is the upright freezer. That’s a regular toilet, not the chemical toilet and there is a black water tank under the floor that can be pumped into your city sewer. Personally, I’d rather install a septic system for you and put in a well. In an emergency, you won’t be able to count on city water and sewer, especially if we get a big earthquake.”

“Seth, you should do whatever you want. I’m quite sure that Rose won’t mind showing the shelter in exchange for our having one.”

“Does your Navigator have a towing package?”

“Sure.”

“Good, because you’re going to need a trailer to move things if you have to bug out from Lancaster.”

“And go where?”

“You can come here. I only intend to put in a one-year supply of food and fuel for your shelter. That will allow the 2 of you to weather whatever comes your way and then bug out when it’s safe to leave. If something happens here and this place become untenable, we’ll come up there.”

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“... and all you have to do is show it if someone makes an appointment to see it Rose.”

“As long as I get advanced warning so I don’t have to change my plans, I can’t see that it’s a problem. Do you really think we need a shelter?”

“I don’t believe that we’re going to have a nuclear war if that’s what you’re asking. But an earthquake is always possible. I suppose they could always have a meltdown at Diablo Canyon and that would bathe us in radiation.”

“Where is Diablo Canyon from here?”

“I looked it up. It is 149 miles (240 km) (129 nautical miles) away with an initial heading from Avila Beach to Lancaster of east-southeast (102.3 degrees). If you assume the average wind is 10mph, we’re about 14 hours away and right in the path of any fallout.”

“And you don’t believe we’re going to be attacked with nuclear weapons?”

“Only a madman would do that. Let me ask you Rose, who would be crazy enough to attack the most powerful nation in the world with nuclear weapons?”

“How much time do you have? Kim Jong-il, Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei, Osama bin Laden, need I go on?”

“I believe what you are suggesting is terrorist attacks, Rose. North Korea is credited with having 10 nuclear weapons. Bin Laden is accused of buying stolen Russian suitcase nukes and I sincerely doubt that Iran has more than 3 weapons, if that.”

“What would happen if someone, any terrorist will do, detonated a nuclear weapon at either Diablo Canyon or San Onofre?”

“Those 2 plants generate about 19% of California electrical power. We’d lose our lights and have a terrible mess to clean up. The prevailing winds would probably carry the radiation to the east. I suppose the radiation could reach from Yuma to Las Vegas.”

“So we don’t need a nuclear attack to need a shelter?”

“No, I suppose not.”

“When are they going to install it?”

“I suppose as soon as they get the permits pulled and the snow melts, probably next week.”

“How big is the shelter?”

“It is 10’ in diameter and 50’ long. It will have to go in crosswise because we don’t really have enough distance going straight back from the house.”

“What else are they putting in?”

“A propane tank to power the generator and the shelter. Seth said he wanted to drill a well and put in a septic system.”

“Are you going to let him?”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 2

“I think it’s a set. In other words, it is an all or nothing proposition. Yes, I suppose so.”

“You can tell him tomorrow to go ahead.”

“What did you get them for Christmas?”

“You’ll see.”

Arvo Ojala, 85, a legendary Hollywood quick-draw expert who appeared as the bad guy who loses the gun duel with James Arness’ Marshal Matt Dillon in the opening of the long-running TV series *Gunsmoke*, died July 1, 2005 in Gresham, Oregon. Ojala built the original Paladin Holster. Alfonso Pineda, the founder of Alfonso’s of Hollywood who now sells the holster was a competitor of Ojala. During the “hay-day” of Fast Draw there were three major makers of Fast Draw rigs. These were Arvo Ojala, Andy Anderson and Alfonso Pineda, known as Alfonso of Hollywood. Interestingly, Anderson and Alfonso both started in the Hollywood leather business working in Arvo’s holster shop. The most famous TV Western rig was the Ojala rig used by Richard Boone as Paladin, the plain black rig with silver chess knight on the holster. While the rigs were being produced in the shop, Arvo was teaching the stars how to look good on film making a Fast Draw. The stars of the early *Adult TV Westerns* all used Ojala rigs. These included the stars of *Gunsmoke*, Wyatt Earp, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Bonanza*, *Cheyenne*, *Maverick* and *Lawman*. While John Russell stayed with his Ojala rig throughout the run of *Lawman*, Deputy Johnny (Peter Brown) soon switched to an Anderson Walk and Draw rig. Don Durant, as Johnny Ringo, used an unusual custom Ojala rig that allowed him to Fast Draw the large and heavy LeMatt sixgun.

By 1959, at the first Colt-Sahara National Fast Draw Championship in Las Vegas, the rig of choice was the Ojala rig, though new Champion Gary Freymeller used a custom Anderson rig. Many of the later TV Westerns used Anderson rigs. These included *Rawhide*, *The Virginian*, *Branded*, *Guns of Will Sonnet*, *Man Called Shenandoah*, Henry Darrow’s unusual swivel rig on *High Chaparral*, and *Laredo*. Future super stars Steve McQueen and Clint Eastwood used Anderson leather exclusively, as did Thell Reed. By the mid-1970s, Anderson had suffered a series of strokes and was forced to retire and close the Gunfighter shop. (Written by Pineda’s son, Omar, and another fella.)

I told you we had James Arness rigs. It was Alfonso’s most sought Hollywood western holster. Price: Single 5½” holster (right or left) and gun belt rig in plain dark tan finish \$325.00. Available for Colt or Colt replicas in .45/.44-40/.357, SAA, in 5½”, 7½”, and 10½” buntline. It’s also available for the Ruger Vaquero, Ruger Vaquero Bisley, in comparable calibers and barrel lengths. The Paladin rig went for \$625 in the 7½” model, at the time.

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That's how Rose and I ended up with a shelter. It belonged to the company and was a demonstrator. I didn't tell her about the bonus money Seth had in his safe. I had several reasons, but perhaps the most important was that Seth hadn't given me the gold. I went back to my tax returns and added up my bonus money. He had said that that was half, so I figured I had the same amount in gold, all purchased at \$300 an ounce. With gold pushing \$600 an ounce, it was a lot of money. Moreover, it was in Seth's safe, out of sight, out of mind.

On Christmas morning I finally learned what 'we'd' gotten them for Christmas. After I saw the shelter Seth had buried beneath his house, I was concerned that Rose hadn't gotten them anything appropriate. Then there was the matter of that demonstrator shelter. And, the gold in Seth's safe. Rose knew about those 2 guns safes Seth and Naomi had in the basement and bought them something special. Model 94, Legacy Case-Colored Octagon in the 26" barrels in .38-55 Winchester. They were very nice looking rifles and reasonably priced at under \$1,000 each. It was the first cowboy gun that Seth had in his arsenal.

She also provided them with a single case of the ammunition, 200 rounds of 255 gr. Super-X Soft Point. I knew that the .30-30 had more energy, but these rifles were something to behold. The .38-55 cartridges had about double the energy of the .45 Colt so they seemed like a good way to start off a collection of cowboy guns.

On Tuesday, Seth was late getting in, not coming through the door until 11am.

"Trouble getting down the mountain?"

"Shopping. That gift Rose and you gave us started something."

"Oh, looking for a revolver?"

"Revolvers, leather and more ammo. Naomi saw the Paladin rig on Alfonso's website and told me to get her one. Nice looking rig, so I got her one in .45 Colt for a 5½" Colt SAA and myself one for the 7½" Colt SAA. You might think I'm foolish, but it's only money. Bought the weapons in the name of the corporation and ordered several cases of .45 Colt ammo and more of the .38-55 Winchester. Where did you get the scabbards for your rifles?"

"El Paso Saddlery for \$145 each. They come in 16", 20", 24" and 26", are suede lined and include the straps. You do know that we got the scabbards as a lark because neither of us ride."

"The permits came through and they'll start installing the shelter, tanks and other things tomorrow. You did discuss this with Rose, right?"

"Yes and she agreed to show the shelter by appointment."

“What about the well and septic system?”

“Oh, I told her it was a package deal.”

“Mind if I ask where you bought the rifles?”

“I don’t mind, but neither do I know. That was entirely Rose’s doing. I assume she bought them through the Gun Shop in Lancaster. If I had bought them, I’d probably gone with the .30-30 caliber.”

“I checked out the Winchester website and I saw both models. Naomi and I are very pleased. Had I bought them, I’d have probably bought the .30-30 too. But Naomi pointed out that the .38-55 is a heavier slug and stands a better chance of putting a person down.”

“How long will this installation take, Seth?”

“I wish I could say, but it depends on the well. I instructed them to drill for a deep aquifer and they told me they weren’t sure how deep they’d have to go. Did you calculate how much propane you’ll need?”

“I didn’t have the specs on the generator, so I couldn’t tell.”

“That the quietest generator Onan makes. It burns anywhere from 1.1gph at 25% power to 2.2gph at 100% power. We assumed that you wouldn’t burn more than 50% power, which is 1.3gph. That would cover you for 100 days or 2,401 hours under ground in case of radiation. The tank we found holds 5,000-gallons and we’ll probably add about 4,500, to give you an edge.”

“Is 5,000-gallons bigger than the tank that you have.”

“It’s bigger than my aboveground tank yes. I didn’t mention my underground tank, and that is a 10,000-gallon tank that normally has 9,500-gallons in it. I’m trying to take the best features of my shelter up at Arrowhead and incorporate them into something people can afford to buy. Your shelter will be fully equipped and have all of the options we’ll sell. The basic shelter is designed by Utah Shelter Systems in Salt Lake. They don’t include the amenities that we’ll sell because they’re expensive. Your shelter, like mine, is totally electric. Oh, I stopped and bought a new SUV today.”

“Really, what did you buy?”

“A H1 Hummer Alpha. I left it so they could make some modifications.”

“Modifications?”

“All the available accessories plus a Fording kit and auxiliary fuel tank. I’m afraid I got carried away, but that vehicle should go anywhere. Your Navigator is a nice vehicle, but its gasoline powered. I think that diesel is most definitely the way to go. We’ll put in an underground diesel tank and a pump. All of those things that we gave you for Christmas were intended to go into the shelter.”

“I didn’t think you could put a fording kit on a H1.”

“The dealer found one on E-Bay and said that they’d have to do a few extra things, like seal the doors and so forth. He called it a NOS Deep Fording System M998. The vehicle fords hard bottom water crossings up to 30 inches (76 centimeters) without a deep-water fording kit and 60 inches (152 centimeters) with the kit.”

“Do you think the conversion will work?”

“I don’t really know, but I doubt I try and ford anything much over 48”, if that. That Navigator of yours has an electronics ignition system, doesn’t it?”

“I think so. Why?”

“Either we build a Faraday Cage in your garage or get you a complete set of replacement parts for the SUV.”

“I’m not much of a mechanic.”

“Good, a Faraday Cage is cheaper.”

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“What’s new?”

“Oh, not much. Seth said they’d modify the garage to include a Faraday cage.”

“What’s that?”

“A lining of metal fabric that absorbs EMP. He didn’t say how they’d do it, maybe some of the fence fabric. If a nuclear weapon went off, it would absorb the Electro Magnetic Pulse that destroys the electrics in vehicles.”

In the course of life, stuff happens. A person prays for the best and prepares for the worst. There is a limit to being prepared. The rock that struck Yucatan 65 million years ago might be an example of something you couldn’t really prepare for. A few years ago, they made 2 films about asteroid strikes and even a laughable one about a global climate change. The films were *Deep Impact*, *Armageddon* and *The Day After Tomorrow*. I like Morgan Freeman and Téa Leoni isn’t exactly hard on the eyes.

Ten days, can you believe it? They dug the hole; it went almost from fence to fence, plopped in the shelter, either connected things or ran stub pipes. They installed and connected the septic system to shelter only, but the well digger was still drilling, headed for China. I learned from him that the term deep aquifer refers not to the depth of the hole, but the depth of the water in the aquifer. Either that or I read it somewhere. The entire Antelope Valley is an old lakebed. The low spots now show up as dry lakes. There are several, but the two largest are Rogers and Rosamond, both off-limits. El Mirage dry lake, located west of Adelanto, is the granddaddy of the movie dry lakes. Countless commercials, movies, and TV shows have been shot there. The lakebed has become popular with the OHV and land yacht crowd.

That snow didn't last long except in the shaded areas. People with north facing homes had a front yard full of snow for several days, just as the south facing houses had a backyard that didn't melt off very fast. Our house faces east and the backyard was a mess. When they had everything finally finished up, they graded it so a landscaper could come in the spring and lay sod, probably late March or early April. Rose was giving me a nightly report on their progress. You should have seen the concrete base they poured for the MA-770MDP tower. Rose said it was 5' square and 5½' deep.

"Did they get it done yet?"

"They poured the base for the antenna tower and the well driller finished up on the well. The concrete will have to set up for 30 days before they'll put in the tower. It's graded but it will be March or April before they can sod over the holes."

"I don't anticipate having many people want to see it before it's done, Joe. I'm not going to start an advertising campaign until it's ready to show. Did they finish your garage?"

"Haven't started."

"I'll make a call. How are sales?"

"Been off this month, but less than I expected. Post-Christmas slump, I expect."

"I worked a deal with the shelter supplier. They will deliver within 90-days guaranteed and we'll handle the installation. We have a few items we need to add to our inventory."

"What?"

"Spare filters, and repair parts for the LUWA systems. Do you have any idea how many suppliers I had to line up to carry a full line of shelter spares and accessories?"

"You don't intend on inventorying a spare shelter do you?"

"Absolutely not. That's why we put in the demo in your backyard. My goal is 120 days from the date of the order to full occupancy."

“Are we going to drill a well on every project?”

“Probably not. I lined up water tanks that are cheaper than wells. We did the demonstrator to represent our top of the line model. Have you been down in the shelter yet?”

“Not yet, it is a little muddy.”

“They didn’t put in the sidewalk?”

“What sidewalk?”

“They were supposed to run a sidewalk from your patio to the blast hatch.”

“That explains it then, we don’t have a patio.”

“You’re supposed to have a patio so the customers can observe your grounds and see how unobtrusive the shelter is.”

“Nobody said anything to me about a patio.”

“You have a gas grill, right?”

“I’ve got a Weber kettle, will that do?”

◦

Seth gets this picture in his mind of how he wants things and that’s the way they’re going to be. They might be Christians, but when it comes to money, they’re still Jewish. Seth doesn’t spend a dime he doesn’t expect will return a dollar. By the time the concrete for the tower cured and they had the tower and antennas up, we had a 12’x20’ covered patio with a propane gas grill and patio furniture. They mixed in some sort of dye and the concrete was about the same color of green the grass would hopefully be.

Our construction project didn’t go unnoticed by the neighbors. Rose got a lot of questions about what we had done. She told everyone that it was a company project putting in a demonstrator, but not real, shelter. She claimed that most of the people believed her. USS claims that that size of shelter will accommodate 50 people. Not in my backyard! I might make an exception for Evan Mace and his wife, Marie, but no more. Evan was retired Air Force, the same as me. He still worked on the base in nearly the same job he had as a Master Sergeant. His commute was 30 miles and mine was 40, one-way.

They came in during mid-March and laid the sod, so I told Seth the place was ready to show. The guy who designed the beds must have been in the Navy, they had box frames with drawers for clothes. The gun safe was a simple office cabinet, modified to

hold our weapons. On one warm Saturday, we finished off putting our things into the shelter. When the supplier couldn't deliver as promised, Seth ended up licensing the shelter design and having them constructed locally. We were averaging selling one a month.

◦

Meanwhile, the economy seemed to go into the crapper. A few cases of avian flu were reported in San Diego and the Chinese were clanking their swords louder than ever. Strangely, the worse the economy became, the better our sales. Seth negotiated a deal with Walton Feed in Idaho and we began ordering their deluxe one-year survival units, a truckload at a time. I was tasked with finding space in the warehouse. I had a PhD (piled higher and deeper) in warehouse loading by the time I was done.

It is probably a 2-hour drive from Sand Canyon to Lake Arrowhead. It was at least a 40-minute drive from Canyon Country to Lancaster. We didn't wonder what was going on; Seth had a bank of 6 TVs set up in the showroom. He had ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, Headline News and CNN blaring from the time we opened until closing. The world was going to hell in a handcart, downhill all the way.

All through 2005, the country worried about Iran developing nuclear weapons. It was that way throughout 2006 and in early 2007, the Israelis solved the problem. On June 7, 1981 Israeli planes bombed and destroyed the Iraqi nuclear facility called Tammuz 1 south of Baghdad. The reasons for this unprecedented operation were enumerated, among them information that the Iraqi reactor would be operational between July and September 1981, and Israel could not permit such a development to endanger its security and possibly its very existence. (Osiraq)

You thought maybe the Israeli's would allow the Iranians to develop a nuclear breeder reactor? Think again. Although the Israelis have nuclear weapons, they have never used them. The general sentiment is that they are a last ditch weapon to be used only in case their hostile neighbors overthrow them. In April of 2007, Israel ended concerns over the Iranian reactors, conducting a conventional bombing campaign that destroyed all of the facilities the Iranians had built. The Iranians, for their part, launched the missiles they had, none nuclear tipped, against Israel. The Israelis intercepted the missiles with their PAC-3 and other ABM systems. Iran filed a protest in the UN.

Ehud Olmert and Shimon Peres were probably laughing in their offices. Sharon had two strokes and was in a vegetative state. The Nobel Peace Prize was earned by Peres (1994) had it as well as Begin (1978) and Rabin (1994). Sharon probably deserved it; he was doing his level best to give the Palestinians their own homeland. At least those that he didn't order shot.

◦

The situation in the Middle East was quite a brouhaha, which can be defined either as

an excited public interest, discussion, or the like, as the clamor attending some sensational event, hullabaloo; or, as an episode involving excitement, confusion, turmoil, etc., esp. a broil over a minor or ridiculous cause. Synonyms for brouhaha include: hubbub, uproar, katzenjammer, noise, furor and furore. Those F-15s the Israelis had seemed to be loaded with bombs, sitting in their holding areas with plenty of IDF troops around, what was that all about? Advertising, as in sending a message? It very well could be. In August 2003 the Israeli Air Force demonstrated the strategic capability to strike far-off targets such as Iran [which is 1,300 kilometers away], by flying three F-15 jets to Poland 1,600 nautical miles away. After they celebrated that country's air force's 85th birthday, on their return trip, the IAF warplanes staged a fly-past over the Auschwitz death camp. The additional 30 F-15s that the Israelis had ordered had been delivered, giving them a total bomber force of 55 F-15s.

The government of Israel initially ordered 25 F-15I Thunders (Ra'am), powered by two Pratt & Whitney F100-PW-229 low bypass turbofan engine. This foreign military sale was valued at \$1.76 billion dollars. The Israeli Air Force received the first two of 25 F-15I aircraft in January 1998. On 22 September 1998 the US Department of Defense announced the sale to the Government of Israel of 30 F-15I aircraft; 30 AN/APG-70 or AN/APG-63(V)1 radar; and 30 each LANTIRN navigation and targeting pods. Associated support equipment, software development/integration, spares and repair parts, flight test instrumentation, publications and technical documentation, personnel training and training equipment, US Government and contractor technical and logistics personnel services, and other related requirements to ensure full program supportability will also be provided. The estimated cost was \$2.5 billion. Israel also has a fleet of F-16s used to bomb Osiraq with the F-15s providing cover.

During 2007, Bush continued to withdraw troops from Iraq, doing so by not replacing units that had completed their tours. The estimate was that by Christmas, all of the troops would be home. The American death toll now stood at 2,400+. The peace movement in the US was gaining ground, too. Iraq would probably turn into the 2nd Vietnam for the US. The week after the Israeli attack on Iran, our phones were ringing off the hook. People were worried and I can't say that I blamed them. CDC was in San Diego, trying to contain the outbreak and I finally got the Doctor to prescribe Tamiflu. He told me it would run about \$50 per card. I had to go to 4 pharmacies before I found it for \$75 a card. I didn't know if Evan had any, but I called him to let him know where it was available. They already had it at \$50 a card; their doctor wasn't so reticent to write the prescription.

"Did you get the Tamiflu?"

"Yep, 2 cards each, one as a prophylactic and one to take if we get sick. The doctor said to wait on the prophylactic dose until it was reported in the area."

Seth paid for both Rose and me to take the EMT-B course at AV College. Once we completed it, he came up with all kinds of things to add to our shelter including a bottle of oxygen, QuikClot bandages for our trauma kit and lactated Ringer's solution, normal

saline, D5NS and D5W with IV sets. If things ever got to the point that we'd need something like IVs, the doo-doo would be up to our chins. You had to know that anything we had in that backyard shelter was also in Seth and Naomi's shelter and probably in far larger quantities. I do know that in May, after an especially good month, they bought a string of horses that were boarded up in the Lake Arrowhead area.

Do you recall the furor in the UN after Israel bombed Osiraq? This time the loudest protestor was the Russians. Most of the Middle Eastern nations and two from the Far East, China and North Korea joined them. The complaining continued until Bush and Gates had no choice except to withdraw the remaining troops from Iraq, ahead of schedule. We weren't out more than a week before a full scale Civil War broke out between the Shia and Sunnis. About the only troops we had on foreign soil were a few advisers in Afghanistan, our South Korean contingent plus our NATO contingent.

We had Air Force Personnel at Ramstein AFB and at RAF Mindenhall and RAF Lakenheath in the UK. We maintained 110 B-61 bombs at Lakenheath for delivery by the Strike Eagles of the 48th. USAF has quite a fleet of aircraft at Mindenhall including 15 KC-135 tankers. Other units include: 352nd SOG, 488th Intelligence Squadron, 95th Reconnaissance Squadron and the 727th Air Mobility Squadron. Our forces at Ramstein included: 435th Air Base Wing, 86th Airlift Wing and the 38th Combat Support Wing.

In South Korea, the US had 2 AFB, Osan and Kunsan. Osan was about 40 miles south of Seoul and Kunsan is about 150 miles south of Seoul on the Yellow Sea. Kunsan is the home of the 8th Fighter Wing and Osan is home of: 51st Fighter Wing, 731st Air Mobility Wing, 33rd Rescue Squadron, 5th Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Battlefield Coordination Detachment, 303rd Intelligence Squadron and the 607th Air Intelligence Squadron. Osan has F-16s, A-10s, C-12s and U-2s. Kunsan flies the F-16s. They have 24 of the block 40 aircraft and 24 of the block 30. They also have 24 F-16s at Osan. The C-12s were moved to Japan.

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"Do you ride?"

"Sure, I ride my old Chevy pickup to work every day."

"Horses?"

"I told you before that our having the rifle scabbards didn't mean anything and when you asked about scabbards for yourself, I told you that neither of us ride."

"Right. Well, you can learn. Did you hear that the last of our people arrived home from Iraq?"

"No I can't and, no, I didn't."

“With the British pulling out during 2006, I think it was inevitable, but the Israelis bombing Iran, we had to scoot while we could.”

“I can understand the UN censuring Israel and I’m sure they expected it. But why, in the name of God, did they censure the United States?”

“We manufactured the F-15I’s they used.”

“I like Bush’s response. Do you really believe they can move the entire UN out of the US in 3 months?”

“He said if they didn’t, he’d declare them all persona non-grata and kick them out. Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations Article 9, a receiving State may *at any time and without having to explain its decision*, declare any member of a diplomatic staff as persona non grata – that is not acceptable (while a persona grata is acceptable) – even before they arrive in the State. It is usual for a person so declared to be recalled to their home nation. If they are not recalled, the receiving State *may refuse to recognize the person concerned as a member of the mission.*”

“CNN?”

“FOX. I loathe CNN.”

“Really?”

“Yes, Paula Zahn follows Wolf Blitzer and then Larry King comes on. Wolf is a horse’s butt and Paula is so liberal it makes you sick. They ought to call their shows, *The Blame Game*. Whatever happened to the concept that stuff happens?”

“It’s your box.”

“Never mind. Now you know why I don’t watch CNN.”

“How did you manage to get Rose to agree to the shelter?”

“We got to discussing Diablo Canyon. It is only about 140 miles west northwest from Lancaster.”

“Three Mile Island fears?”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 3

“The place is built on an earthquake fault.”

“What are you thinking, either an earthquake or terrorist attack?”

“Yes, both. If terrorists took out either one of the nuclear plants, I believe that the lights would go out in California, especially during the summer. Among them, the 4 reactors at the 2 plants generate almost 20% of California’s electricity. If Diablo Canyon was attacked and radiation released, we’d be about 14 hours downwind. You thought I talked Rose into the shelter, Seth, but the truth is she was in favor of it from the beginning.”

“Why don’t Rose and you come over Saturday to go riding.”

“I’ll ask, but no promises. Thanks.”

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I cross the San Andreas Fault twice every day on the way to and from work. Just north of Avenue S, the freeway cuts through the fault and you can actually see the folding of the rock. If it weren’t so darned frightening, it would be interesting. This is a slip fault so if it let loose on the freeway, it would be closed for quite a while. There actually isn’t any way into the Antelope Valley from Santa Clarita that doesn’t cross the fault. They closed the Palmdale Hospital for 2 reasons. One it went broke and two, it was too close to the fault and in the event of an earthquake probably would have collapsed like Olive View did during the Sylmar Quake in ‘71.

Palmdale is the largest city in the US without a hospital. There used to be 4, AV, Community, High Desert and Palmdale. AV was a trauma center but withdrew from the program. Palmdale Hospital went bust and High Desert was closed by the County to contain costs. Community most does the heart work and AV the trauma work. All Kaiser has is an urgent care in Lancaster. Any work related injuries would require a trip to Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital (HMNMH), a 217-bed comprehensive care trauma center and nonprofit community hospital. Great place to visit, but I wouldn’t want to stay. They’re building a new hospital in Palmdale, however.

“Seth wants us to come over to Lake Arrowhead on Saturday to go riding.”

“But, we don’t ride.”

“I told him, but he wasn’t listening. They bought those 4 horses and he has requested our company.”

“It’s not fair, but I don’t see how we can refuse. Especially not after he put in the demo shelter. Sold many of those?”

“Let’s see. We sold one in March, two in April and two in May. He only indicated that he wanted to sell a dozen a year, but you know how the times have been lately.”

“Did you extend the store hours?”

“No, but with the number of Internet orders we’re getting, we have to work late to get the orders packed. I think we’ve probably sold 350-400 cases of N-95 masks and another 100 or so of the N-100. We’ve even added exam gloves to our product line. There was a case of avian flu reported in Irvine, so I’d say it is working its way north and scaring the crap out of people.”

“Should we start the Tamiflu?”

“Probably not before it reaches the San Fernando Valley.”

“So what about the horse riding trip?”

“Like you said, Rose, they did put in the shelter. I’ve never been on a horse in my entire life.”

There was a downside to having a boss like Seth. Oh, sure, he put in the shelter, but that was as much for his benefit as ours. He didn’t compensate Rose for her time even if she showed it every day. And, when you got an invitation to go riding, he didn’t really care if you could ride or not. He reminds me of sweet and sour sauce. By the way, the underlying concept of the meal package that Walton Feed sold was that it included TVP in lieu of meat. Enhanced shelf life, but it wasn’t meat. Those one-year deluxe units were selling like hotcakes, but I had the impression that our customers were only buying one unit per family. It included 9 pails, 6 wheat and 3 beans plus 11 cases of #10 cans of whatever and 2 extra #10 cans, one of baking powder, one of baking soda and 4 1# packages of yeast. The buyer added 4 gallons of oil and whatever sugar they wanted.

One of the eleven boxes had 5 cans and a cookbook. If you were thinking that you were getting a total of 68 cans and 9 pails, you came up one can short. Our advantage was that we delivered for a flat fee on the company truck, the day after you ordered it. Our price was a bit higher, but if you figured the delivery cost from Idaho, we were close and if you considered not having to wait, we were the best choice. And, we explained that one case only had 5 cans. We didn’t explain how cheaply you could buy the stuff by the 40’ truckload and I doubt Wal-Mart did either.

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We were resigned to go riding with Seth and Naomi. Rose told me she had ridden a couple of times in high school and that a horse could sense fear. She suggested that I have a positive attitude. She had talked to Naomi and what they had in mind was a trail ride in the woods. There wouldn’t be any place to run the horses and Naomi also sug-

gested western wear if we had it. She was the opposite of Seth who could sometimes be brash and short.

I pulled my Wrangler hatbox off the shelf and dusted off my white straw hat. Rose pulled out my 501s and my only western shirt. I'd worn cowboy boots for years because they added 1½" to my height. I kept a good pair and the pair I usually wore to work. When the work boots bit the dust, I would buy a new dress pair and take my good boots for work.

"Are we going to take our cowboy guns?"

"I don't know, Rose. Seth didn't say. We could put them in the back of the SUV and have them if we need them."

"Naomi said that Seth was really worried."

"Really? Does he have to buy another safe to hold the money we've made this year?"

"Your business is driven in part by panic, Joe. Given the sharp increase in sales, how would you assess the mood of the country?"

"I can't really tell you about the rest of the country, but locally people are near panic. We can't get the 3M products in as fast as we sell them. Our supplier in Idaho wants at least 30 days' notice on the next order. I've heard that you can't find Tamiflu anywhere in greater LA."

"We'd better get to bed; Naomi said Seth was planning on starting out around 10am."

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Around 4am, we felt a sharp jolt and then shaking that lasted for about 30 seconds. I couldn't really tell how strong the earthquake was, but it wasn't in the immediate area. We were both wide-awake and Rose went to the kitchen to start coffee while I fired up my HP computer to check the USGS website. On the way by, I turned on the TV to channel 2 KCBS. The network channels in the Antelope Valley are KCBS-2, KNBC-4 and KABC-7. If you want real news and an absence of pontificating, you selected either 2 or 7. This quake was in the northern San Fernando Valley. That made 3, Sylmar, Northridge and now this.

"Here's your coffee, where was the epicenter?"

"Too soon to tell, but in the San Fernando Valley. Seth and Naomi went to Lake Arrowhead last night. I'm going to have to drive to Canyon County and check on the store. Why don't we get around early, check on the store then stop and have breakfast somewhere?"

“I’ll get in the shower.”

“Save me some hot water!”

We didn’t get out of Lancaster until about 5:45am. That would put us in Canyon Country between 6:15 and 6:30. I didn’t really know what to expect so I also brought my Kimber and extra mags. Highway 14 was closed and we had to get off and continue on to Canyon Country on Sierra Highway. I turned west on Soledad Canyon Road and north on Plum Canyon Road. The building was intact so I got out a flashlight and went to unload the door. The power was out because our outside security light was out. Some of the stacked inventory in the warehouse had fallen to the floor, but I couldn’t see anything that was broken. I went to the office and called Seth up at the lake.

“Seth, I’m at the store. Other than some inventory that has shifted in the warehouse, we’re ok.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Around 4am, we had an earthquake in the San Fernando Valley. Rose and I stopped by the store and warehouse to check on things before we came to Arrowhead.”

“Find my Rolodex and the card for the security company. Call them and tell them that we need guards 24/7 until at least Monday. Tell them I said a minimum of 2 guards.”

“If you’d rather, Rose and I can put up here and keep an eye on the place.”

“You’re going to be here riding at 10am. Call them, get some breakfast on the company and we’ll see in about 3 hours.”

I called the security firm and they would provide a car and 2 armed-guards through Monday. Once they arrived Rose and I got breakfast and got on 14. We took 210 to Pasadena, getting off at state road 2 in La Cañada Flintridge. 2 would get us to 138 near Wrightwood and after that, you know the way I go. When we finally got to I-15, I stopped and topped of my tank. This was going to be a very long day. It was 9:45 by the time we pulled in.

o

“What’s the situation at the store?”

“Lights are out, some of the inventory is tossed about in the warehouse, but all in all, not bad.”

“The news said it was a M_w 5.9 in Van Nuys. I called Eddie and he’ll make sure the server is up and running, we wouldn’t want to miss any orders. I told him to decide what the warehouse needed and call in people to clean it up. You ready to go?”

“I wouldn’t mind coffee first; it has been a long morning Seth.”

“Help yourself; the pot is always on in this house. I see you’re wearing cowboy duds, did you bring your guns?”

“In the back of the Navigator. What kind of outfit do you call that?”

“Doctor John Holliday.”

“Fine, as long as you don’t think I’m Wyatt Earp.”

“You don’t have a Buntline Special.”

“Neither did Wyatt.”

Seth was wearing what was once called the Victorian cutaway coat, also called a morning coat. During the Victorian era, men either wore a frock coat, which went to the knees or a morning coat, which was about halfway to the knees. During the late 1800s, the morning coat was the most common day coat. I figured he have the coat off as soon as the day warmed up.

◦

“Do you see what you created when you gave them those rifles for Christmas last year? It’s a monster! Be glad he doesn’t have Naomi and you wearing period dresses.”

“If he does, we’ll feed him period food, which will cure that.”

“Do you think so?”

“Naomi says that Seth hates beans.”

“Right so he has food for 16 and that includes 48 pails of beans.”

“Did you feel that?” Rose asked as the floor rumbled again.

“Aftershock?”

“Naomi told me that they didn’t feel the original quake.”

“Did you feel that?” Naomi asked. “Was it an aftershock?”

“Must have been, Naomi. Foreshocks only precede an earthquake by a few minutes.”

“Seth was on the phone talking to Eddie about the server and the phone went out.”

“Seth are you sure you still want to go riding today? It might make more sense if we headed to Canyon County and saw to the store.”

“I suppose we’d better, Joe. We can go riding next weekend. Why don’t we all just return to Santa Clarita? We probably ought to see if everything is ok at our home, too.”

Naomi and Rose rode in the navigator and Seth and I rode in the Hummer. This SUV was really a beast.

“You know that the Landers quake was a quake that involved activity on 5 different faults, don’t you? Maybe that wasn’t an aftershock but a trigger response on another fault.”

“It’s just what we need with the hospitals already overloaded with avian flu patients.”

“Did Rose and you start the prophylactic treatment with Tamiflu?”

“We discussed it and I suggested that we wait until it was in the Valley.”

“Antelope Valley?”

“San Fernando.”

“You’d better start the treatment; there are a few cases in the area.”

“Fine, she carries the cards in her purse. We’ll take the first dose when we get to the office. Did you already start?”

“Yes, on Thursday. Now all we need is for some terrorists to attack the reactors at San Onofre and Diablo Canyon.”

“Have you ever heard the expression, *be careful what you wish for because God has a sense of humor?*”

“New one on me. What does it mean?”

“So far the outbreak of avian flu is minor. But you add a pair of medium earthquakes to the mix and throw in a nuclear disaster or two and you’ll have trouble with a capital T.”

“Naomi said you were talking to Eddie?”

“Yes, the backup power kicked in and kept the computer system up. I don’t know what the phone lines being down means. It may or may not have affected our T-1 line. He brought in the full crew and they had the warehouse picked up and went ahead and be-

gan filling the orders off the Internet. I told him everyone was on time and a half for the day and that they should just order in meals.”

“Spending big?”

“We needed to do it to get caught up anyway, Joe. Eddie said they pulled the demo generator off the showroom floor and got the lights up.”

“You should have changed, Seth. How are they going to feel when Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp show up?”

“Huh, I completely forgot. No big thing, I can stop by home and change.”

“Don’t, I’d like to see the look on their faces. Naomi told Rose who told me that you don’t care for beans.”

“They don’t care for me. I like them, but most of the time, they aren’t worth the afterwards. I tried the Beano and it seems to work. I’ve heard that you can add baking soda and all sorts of things, but I’ve found that taking beano and really chewing well works the best.”

o

We didn’t get back to Canyon Country until 2pm. By then I was getting very tired. It had been bad getting from Canyon Country to Lake Arrowhead and the return journey was even worse. We stopped and filled the fuel tanks and the girls went ahead to Seth and Naomi’s home in Sand Canyon. We went to the store to see how they were coming with the cleanup and order filling.

“Who are you supposed to be?” the security guards asked.

“I’m the owner and he’s my assistant manager,” Seth explained. Never mind the clothes; we were in the middle of a reenactment when the second quake struck.”

Reenactment? Quick thinking. There was some snickering when Seth and I entered the building. He quickly ended that with the question, “Ok, where is the OK Corral? Wyatt and I have an appointment with the Clanton’s. What’s the situation, Eddie?”

“The T-1 line didn’t go down and we’re getting more orders than you can imagine. Some items are already showing out-of-stock on the web page. I think we could probably work all night and all day tomorrow just filling the orders.”

“Anyone who wants to work tomorrow filling orders will be on time and a half with meals provided. See how many people you can get to work.”

Our week began on Sunday and it wouldn't have normally been time and a half, except over 8 hours. We weren't required to provide a meal, just a meal break and 2 coffee breaks. Only where they worked 7 consecutive days in a single pay period would we get into a double time situation. My gears were turning and I figured that Seth must figure he'd come out ahead by working all weekend. Sometimes he thinks of things differently than I do, I have paid time and a half on Friday, not Sunday.

They already had picked up after the second quake and the pile of filled orders streamed out the door. Anything we were going to deliver locally was already on the truck ready for Monday deliveries. And, more, I might say, there was at least another truckload ready to load.

"Go get a Ryder truck, Joe and we'll load this stuff up. It's a shame we can't get a UPS pickup tomorrow."

"I'll call and see if we can get a Saturday pickup, they're available, but usually only if they're scheduled in advance."

"UPS."

"This is Joe at Rim of the World Preparedness in Santa Clarita, California. Is there any chance we could get a pickup today?"

"Give me your customer number."

"Hang on."

I grabbed the book and read her the number.

"You normally have Monday through Friday pickups."

"Right, but we ended up working because of the earthquakes and we have a semi-load ready to ship."

"Please hold and I'll check if there is a truck available."

"We have a truck, but no loaders."

"Our whole staff is working, we can load the truck."

"Fine, 4pm."

Big deal, we usually loaded the trucks anyway while the driver did the paperwork and checked off the packages. They use a scanner and have to note the barcode on every package. We could set up what amounted to a bucket brigade passing the packages by the UPS driver. We'd done it a couple of times before when the orders were very large.

This particular driver turned out to be from Lancaster. I asked and everything was fine up home.

“Did you line everyone up to work tomorrow?” Seth asked.

“A couple of the fellas won’t be in until after church, but we’ll have a full crew all afternoon.”

“Eddie tells me we’ve run out of 30% of our normal inventory. I have to give Idaho 30 days advance notice so I’d imagine we can either take backorders or not accept orders.”

“What would you prefer?”

“Backorder with us not processing the credit cards until the order ships, that’s what the computer program is geared to do. We’ll give cash order top priority. Can you believe it, one guy showed up with gold coins wanting to buy 2 of the deluxe one year food supplies?”

“What did we do?”

“Eddie checked the bid price of gold and made the deal. You can always check the price at Kitco.”

It wasn’t what one would call a typical California weekend. The avian flu hadn’t become an epidemic and for sure but not a pandemic, just yet. Normally, you might expect an earthquake and a few aftershocks, but 2 separate earthquakes? That hadn’t happen since Landers busted loose on 5 different faults. I put the thought of San Onofre and Diablo Canyon out of my mind, I wasn’t about to tempt fate. The high points on the Landers quake were: M_w 7.3, epicenter $34^\circ 13' N$, $116^\circ 26' W$ 6 miles north of Yucca Valley, on June 28, 1992 at 4:57:31 am PDT. It caused ruptures on 5 faults: Johnson Valley, Landers, Homestead Valley, Emerson and Camp Rock. The rupture length was 85 km (53 miles) with an average slip of about 3 to 4 meters and a maximum slip of 6 meters. The largest aftershock was at Big Bear and was M_w 6.4. It was a shallow quake with a depth of 1.1km.

I can’t tell you why I remember about the Landers quake, perhaps because the surface eruptions were all over the news. A quake that tore up 53 miles of surface was really big news at the time. We got busy at the store and only called it quits when the UPS truck was loaded. Seth and I went to their house in Sand Canyon and Naomi announced that since business was so good, Seth could take us out to dinner. He showed her the 3 gold Eagles the guy had used to pay for his order. That put a sparkle in her eye.

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Naomi had made a reservation at the Odyssey for 8pm. We had just enough time to get cleaned up and dressed and off we went. Boasting spectacular views from high atop the

San Fernando Valley, the Odyssey is in Granada Hills. A gurgling fountain welcomes customers to digs filled with oak paneling, brass fixtures and floor-to-ceiling windows. Definitely a spot for romance, the grounds feature a koi pond, dimly lit patio and a garden gazebo. Lunch fare includes sandwiches such as grilled eggplant and smoked salmon, and heartier items like flame-grilled Pacific swordfish. Starters run the gamut from tempura shrimp to calamari to escargot. Dinner offers plenty of seafood selections such as scampi Chardonnay, broiled lobster tail and northern halibut. Prime steaks like grilled filet mignon served over garlic-mashed potatoes are popular, but if you'd prefer the best of both worlds, order a combination. There are also six pasta and vegetarian dishes, in case meat's not your thing. When it came to fronting a meal, there was nothing cheap about Seth. We did the surf and turf and it was good thing he was paying. Oy veh!

"I drank too much wine last night."

"I wasn't sure what to order with surf and turf, so I got a Chardonnay and a Merlot."

"Both top of the line, Seth, thanks."

"If we have a good day today, we'll be caught up on orders. I think we'll need two UPS trucks on Monday. We can make the deliveries and return the Ryder truck Monday night."

"Did you call Idaho?"

"Their hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm. I got their machine and left a message to prepare two semi loads. I'm hoping they'll ship the first load in a couple of weeks and the second by the end of the 30 days."

"Do we have a lot of backorders?"

"I was going to wait for Eddie to check. You know me and computers."

"I'll check. Wow, 100 units for the one year supplies on backorder."

"I'll have to call Idaho Monday and order a third load."

"I think they can put about 100 units in one semi. They're 33ft³ and weigh 767 pounds."

"I don't think so; I think the limit is about 60 units per truck, Joe. It's the weight as much as the volume."

In the Aftermath – Chapter 4

And that's what it was like for the next 3 months into 2007. The earthquakes occurred on April 14, 2007 and it was now the 4th of July and Seth was throwing a company picnic. Neither of the quakes qualified as *The Big One*, they were just your routine M5-M6 quakes. They'd had their election in Iraq in December of 2005 and we were out of there, but I believe I mentioned that.

The United States had other worries, the UN had balked at leaving and Bush had, in fact, declared all of the delegates as PNG. US Marshals escorted them to their planes and Bush announced that the US was no longer a member of the United Nations. Man, you should have heard the furor in Congress over that one! Oh, yeah, they finally confirmed Bush's nominee to the Court. It took a while and I guess I didn't think to mention it. Bush had succeeded in doing what Roosevelt had only dreamed of, packing the Court. His popularity took a bit of an upswing when they brought the troops home but that UN fiasco sort of finished it off. I would have thought that that would have raised him back above 50%!

Since the earthquakes, we'd worked 6 days a week instead of our usual 5. Things had finally slowed down in June and most of the guys took their vacations. At least with the overtime, most could afford it. Gold had continued to rise as the economy slipped and the flu spread around the county. They had that vaccine and that went to children and seniors. The remainder of us used Tamiflu. The government had been stockpiling it since 2005 and apparently there were enough doses to go around. The H5N1 virus wasn't one that paid much attention to the age of the person who contracted the virus. It just made you sicker than all get out and you lived or you died, 50-50 without treatment.

A few people apparently died from the Tamiflu. It had something to do with how the medicine worked in the body. There were those kids in Japan in 2005 and then some people in the US in April through July of 2007. Apparently the government concluded the outbreak was contained because the airlines were flying again. The picnic was at the Circle J Ranch Park. It had picnic tables, a child play area and public restrooms. If you every get to Santa Clarita, it's located at 22651 Via Princessa. I had skipped taking vacation this year, accumulating time on the books and filling in at the warehouse so everyone else could get their vacation taken.

I don't think that Seth ever took a vacation, but he was the boss. He'd take the occasional day off, generally a Friday and Naomi and he would go up to Lake Arrowhead and go riding. After the April earthquakes, we were so busy that we never had a change to get back up there to ride. That really broke my heart. Not! However, it was inevitable and Rose found a place in Lancaster where we could go to ride. Some Sunday afternoons we did that and some we went shooting. Others, well let's just say that we never made it out of the bedroom. I turned 49 in May and most certainly was dreading the following year with the *Over the Hill* birthday parties that were so popular in California for 50th birthdays. Rose was only 5 months younger than me. Although, I'll have to say that

for a 48-year-old woman, she was in fine form, aerobics or some such nonsense. I could just barely pinch an inch so I wasn't what you'd call fat.

Working at the store would burn the fat off of any man or woman, it was dead run time most of the time until June rolled around.

Those shelters were selling faster than we could get them delivered and installed. I think that during May, Rose must have shown the shelter 20 times and about half who looked, bought. She said she got so she could tell who would and who wouldn't buy one by listening to them complain when they climbed down the ladder. She bought a vacuum sealer and was rotating meat out of the shelter freezer into the kitchen freezer and from there to the table. We shopped at Sam's Club in Palmdale and Costco in Lancaster most of the time. Sometimes when we couldn't find what we wanted, we went to the Costco that wasn't all that far from the store. That store was located at 18649 Via Princessa. There were also Costco stores in Northridge, Canoga Park, Simi Valley and the one they were refurbishing in Van Nuys.

"How far are we behind on delivering shelters?"

"Boss, it's the 4th of July, why talk business?"

"Just curious."

"If we don't sell any more, we can put in 3 in July, 3 in August and 3 in September. That accounts for the ones we have sold. However, if we average 2 a month, we'll also have 3 installations for October and November."

"When are you going to come up to Arrowhead to go riding?"

"Whenever you invite us again. We've been taking riding lessons so it isn't like the last time."

"What do you hear from your daughter?"

"Diane? She calls Rose about every other week. They're fine. He got a promotion with the power company there so Diane said she didn't think they'd come out this year."

"How many grandchildren?"

"Three, 2 girls and a boy. How is your boy doing?"

"Samuel? He graduated from medical school and is doing a 5-year residency at Sloan Kettering Institute. He wants to be a surgeon."

"Big name hospital."

“One of the best, especially their Cancer Institute.”

“Married?”

“Engaged to some Shiksa Italian Medical student. Name is Rachael.”

“So what’s the problem, Italian probably means Catholic the same as you are?”

“I could care, but Naomi is pretty upset. Nice girl, though, they were out a while back. Got a chest out to here and she’s very pretty. Wide hips, built for having babies.”

And, now you know what men talk about, as if you needed to guess. Rose later explained that Jewish lineage was passed from the mother. If Samuel married a non-Jew, their children wouldn’t be considered Jewish. Right about now wasn’t a good time to be Jewish. Iraq was in the middle of a Civil War and the other countries were either involved in that or looking longingly at the Nation of Israel with an eye, perhaps, to another invasion. And yes, according to FOX News, those F-15Is were still sitting in their hardened shelters full loaded.

Other things that had happened between the earthquakes and July 4th were the FBI and Homeland Security disrupting another terrorist plot. Details on that were very sparse on the news. They’d moved the detainees to Gitmo so I suppose there was some arm-twisting going on. The US did it all wrong, what they should have done was get the Israelis to do the questioning. Right about now, I didn’t figure the Israelis could spare any Mossad Operatives, not with the unrest in the Middle East.

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The odds on favorite for an attack against the United States had been and remained the People’s Republic of China, probably in conjunction with an attack on Taiwan. The US had succeeded in producing more of the pits for the W88 warhead and to the best of my knowledge all 14 of the SSBNs had now been outfitted with the 475kT W-88 warheads. And since the JL-2 missiles were capable of being MIRV’d with 4 or some said 6 90kT warheads, the two type 094 missile subs that Chinese had was capable of delivering up to 72 90kT warheads, depending on who was right. The JL-2 missile is a modified version of the D-31 missile and the range estimates varied all the way up to 9,000km. Whether the sub was in the Atlantic, Caribbean or near Pacific, it could hit any target in the US. China also had one type 092 with 12 JL-1 missiles.

I still didn’t believe that China would launch a preemptive strike on the US, regardless of the circumstances. And if all of the D-5 Trident were in fact armed with the W-88s and the Peacekeeper warheads, the W-77 warhead with a yield of 300kT, we had the capacity to destroy much of the known world. I was assuming that the 4 SSGNs had the 400 nuclear tipped land attack cruise missiles with their W-80 warheads. I had nightmares, because that meant we had three types of missiles, totaling some 400 nuclear cruise missiles, 2,688 W-88 warheads and another 500 Minuteman III missiles. New to-

tal from the past, but it was still 3,804 warheads. Then there were the 20 B-2 bombers each capable of carrying 16 of the B-83 bombs and 36 of the F-117 Nighthawks which could each carry 2 B-61s. As I pointed out earlier, we had 110 B-61 bombs in the UK to be carried by our Strike Eagles. A quick math check gave me a total of 518 bombs in addition to the 3,804 warheads for a total of 4,322 nuclear weapons for land attack missions.

In addition, the Navy was reported to have nuclear depth charges and possible even some nuclear tipped torpedoes. I do know that when the Scorpion went down it was carrying 2 of the nuclear tipped torpedoes. When a person reaches a total over 4,000, it didn't seem to make a difference. Our tally of deliverable weapons outnumbered the Chinese by a factor of 10. On the other hand, who could tell, the Chinese were most secretive. North Korea, on the other hand probably didn't have as many weapons as they boasted. We were in the aftermath of an avian flu epidemic, some said pandemic, and the M_w 5.9 and M_w 6.3 April earthquakes had southern California in what I could only describe as a big mess. Although Bush hadn't signed on to the Kyoto Accords, he was due out in 2008 and everyone was saying that the Democrats would take power across the board. Former President Bill Clinton was a big supporter of the Accords and it was probably just a matter of time.

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Authors Note: I had planned on stopping writing. With the boy in Baghdad, I'm writing to keep my mind off that. I still can't imagine why he has to have a Secret security clearance to be a grunt in Iraq. And I really can't understand why he can't tell me what he's doing. I'm on his side! They no doubt told him I don't have a need to know and my security clearance expired in 1967. Damon called and even he is worried with the elections on December 13, 2005. The only real question I have now is why George W. Bush believes that the US can win The War on Terror. Maybe if he'd fought in Vietnam, he'd know better. My clearance was Secret and Damon's was Top Secret because of the crypto gear.

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Our 4th of July picnic was well along and we were just sitting down to eat when that darned NOAA radio went off. Seth carried it on his belt everywhere he went. As of 2005 4 functions were not implemented in the NWR system: EAN, EAT, NPT and NMN. Translation: Emergency Action Notification, Emergency Act Termination, National Periodic Test and Network Message Notification. In July of 2007, those codes were now active.

“What does the message say?”

“EAN. I'll go check the Hummer radio.”

“Everyone, pack up, we’re leaving. There have been terrorist attacks at 20 reactors including both of those in southern California. Joe, do Rose and you want to shelter in Lancaster or come to the cabin?”

“Rose, what do you say?”

“How long would it take us to load our things?”

“Maybe 2 hours. We could be at Arrowhead with 10 hours to spare.”

“Arrowhead.”

“Does anyone want to use the company shelter in Lancaster?” I asked. “It has everything you’d need and food for 2 for 12 months. You’ll be right in the path of any fallout, but it is buried 10’ deep and has its own well and septic system. All you’d have to do is service the generator and sit tight.”

Everyone’s hand went up.

“Stop by the shop and pick up a couple of years of food and head there,” Seth suggested. “Joe can give you the address. Joe you turn on your radio and preset it to VHF Guard. Fire up the generator and make sure everything they need to service the generator is readily available. Listen folks, it may be a little cramped but if you have enough food, it will do. Be sure that you park a couple of cars in Joe’s garage because it has a Faraday cage.”

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We were just finishing up loading that trailer when people began to pour in. Apparently most had stopped by home because in addition to the food from the warehouse, most had a suitcase and weapons. Since we weren’t moving the food, all we had to do was load everything else into the Navigator and take off. We wait for one person to show up; Eddie, and I gave him a quick run through on shelter procedures and showed him where to find the oil and filters for the generator. I had already installed the special biological/chemical filter and he said he could handle the radio because he had a General class ham license. I also showed him how to empty the black water tank into the septic system.

I hadn’t been 2-hours, more like one and we took off east to pick up 50th Street east and then south to Palmdale to the Junction of 138. All we really had to load was guns, ammo, clothes, our trauma bag and medical supplies and my laptop computer. I had a box of CDs that went with the computer and contained information that wouldn’t fit on the HDD. Just as we were getting ready to pull out, Evan and Marie show up.

“You got your emergency stuff?”

“Yeah, we planned on sheltering in place with you.”

“Is your gas tank full?”

“I have a full load of diesel.”

“Fine, follow us and try to keep up.”

“Where are you going?”

“Lake Arrowhead, Evan.”

“What’s in Lake Arrowhead?”

“Another shelter, you’ll really like it.”

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“Do you think Seth and Naomi will mind?”

“As much as I’ve talked about Evan and Marie, I doubt it. Seth’s shelter is 16’ under his basement and it’s really big. And, I guess I might as well tell you, you and I have a bunch of gold in the safe in his shelter.”

“How long have you known this?”

“Christmas 2006.”

“And, just when did you intend to tell me?”

“When you need to know like right about now.”

“How much gold?”

“You know the bonuses he pays every year? That amount of money converted into gold at \$300 an ounce. I checked the tax returns and we were paid \$22,500 in bonuses over the past 10 years. So, that is about 75 ounces. I don’t know how he does it, as we go along or at the end of the year.”

“You’re lucky you’re driving.”

“Why?”

“I have half a mind to blow your head off for keeping that a secret.”

“Is the CD-715 on?”

“Do you want it on?”

“Might be a good idea. All of the radiation stuff is in that orange duffle bag.”

“Ok, it on and on the lowest range. So far, we don’t have any radiation. I’m sure Diane is ok.”

“There isn’t a reactor in Pueblo and Rocky Flats is shut down. I can’t believe that they’d get much fallout.”

“They probably won’t unless someone attacks the US with ICBMs.”

“Don’t say that, God might hear you.”

We managed the drive in 90 minutes. When I was sure we were in range, I called Seth.

“Can you handle 2 more guests?”

“Who?”

“My Air Force buddy, Evan Mace and his wife Marie.”

“Two more won’t be a problem, can you vouch for him?”

“Retired USAF Master Sergeant who works on the base. I’ve known him since boot camp. Evan is a speed draw fan and has done well in some contests.”

“I hope he brought his guns.”

“That’s affirmative.”

“Where are you?”

“About 20-30 minutes out.”

“I’ll be waiting.”

“10-4”

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“Evan and Marie Mace, meet Seth and Naomi Goldman.”

“I’m sorry Mr. Goldman, we had intended to shelter with Joe and Rose in their shelter.”

“Mi casa, su casa. Pull you vehicles into the garage and bring your things to the shelter. Joe, you show them the way.”

“Joe, you didn’t say your boss was Jewish.”

“Accident of birth, they’re Roman Catholics.”

“A Jewish Roman Catholic? I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“You must not get around much, Evan. There are even Jewish Mormons. Nice people, you’ll like them. Grab whatever you brought and bring it downstairs to the basement. I brought all of my guns and ammo plus enough clothes for about a week.”

“Did you remember your prescriptions?” Rose asked.

“I brought what we had.” Evan replied.

“If you run short, let Seth know, he has a well-stocked clinic in his shelter. I may even have some of what you need in my trauma bag.” I suggested.

Evan, I should point out, was a type II diabetic with hypertension. He took two oral diabetes meds and Humalin. I knew that Seth had syringes and some oral meds, but I hadn’t paid that close of attention. Besides, how long would we be in the shelter, a couple of weeks?

“Eddie this is Seth on VHF guard. Come up on 144.625.”

“This is Eddie, standby.”

“Seth, Eddie, what’s the situation?”

“Turn on the CD V-717 and check the radiation level and advise.”

“Roger, already done. The level is normal, so far.”

“10-4. Joe and Rose and their friends are here. Check back in 6-hour intervals. Did everyone make it to Lancaster?”

“Affirmative. We’re locked down.”

“How much food did you get?”

“More than enough, 4 one-year supplies.”

“Roger you have a total of 6 years for 6 people. How many souls?”

“18.”

“Roger, you have 4 months, that’s more than enough. Joe says that there is a 3-ring binder with complete instructions on his radio table.”

“10-4, found it. Talk to you in 6 hours.”

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The flu vaccine was a modified form of H5N1. It was designed and developed by Robert Webster of St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. He has spent more than 50 years trying to outsmart influenza viruses. Creating this vaccine was particularly difficult because making it – like all flu vaccines – requires the virus to be grown in chicken eggs. H5N1 proved lethal to the eggs.

To get around that obstacle, Webster and his colleagues used a process called reverse genetics. They extracted the portion of the gene that made H5N1 so virulent, while leaving the rest of the virus intact. The resulting virus was no longer so lethal, but in clinical trials, it still stimulated the immune system to produce a strong protective response to the original strain. Citing national security, the Department of Health and Human Services wouldn’t say where the vaccine was being stored. Since two shots, a month apart, are given to each person. Finally, there was CAIV-T a new version of the company’s nasal spray vaccine FluMist, which is currently approved to prevent flu in healthy children and adolescents, 5 to 17 years of age, and healthy adults, 18 to 49 years of age. The advantage to the new MedImmune product was it didn’t have to be kept frozen.

Who cared about the flu? We wouldn’t catch the flu in Seth’s shelter. These terrorists lacked a sufficient quantity of suitcase nukes, or whatever nuke they used, and tried to blow some of those 20 reactors with ANFO. ANFO is a powerful explosive, but have you ever seen how strongly they build those containment domes?

A typical containment dome under construction looks a lot like a super-sized wicker basket. Hundreds of cables are laid down in rings around the dome, and hundreds more form polar quarter-circles out from the top, or semicircles that run near the top, and/or they follow various ellipses around the dome. The main cables are typically 2 to 3 inches thick with some even thicker, and they are cross-braced with thousands of shorter 1-inch-thick cables. The whole thing is filled in around all the cables with concrete, forming the infamous domes that you see from the highway.

This system is called “pre-stressed” because a portion of the cable is left outside the concrete and is pulled with tremendous pressure while the concrete is hardened around the cable, and it is only after the concrete has hardened that the device doing the pulling is relaxed. Sometimes the “device” is a tightened bolt on a threaded end of the cable, which is left on afterwards.

San Onofre's containment domes, for all their apparent mass and heft when viewed from the outside, are surprisingly thin and eggshell-like when considered in proportion. Or when it is considered that the containment dome is believed by most people to be strong enough to survive the impact of a 747 or an A-380 Airbus, but it can't. It can only survive the impact of much smaller planes – even smaller than the four 767s used by terrorists on 9-11.

Furthermore, that's not really their purpose. The real purpose of the containment dome is to hold back explosions inside the dome during a meltdown or near-meltdown of the core. These are expected to generate forces less than about 3.5 atmospheres within the dome – otherwise, the containment dome will burst and once it does, "all hell breaks out." But 3.5 atmospheres is not really all that much. And what if the containment dome, with all its mass, were to fall apart during an earthquake? Well, they worried a little about that and decided to make the wires a little thicker and put a few more of them in place and tension them a bit tighter and viola! Instant earthquake-proof!

Of course, it's bogus too. Maybe they made what might survive a 6.8 earthquake into something that might survive a 7.4. And maybe they overstressed something and didn't realize it and the containment dome can now only survive a 6.3. Or maybe some of the wires have rusted inside because nobody noticed a wet rag that was dropped into the cement as it was poured, or a tool, that formed a bimetallic contact point. These things most certainly DO happen, although the nuclear industry assumes they don't when they calculate the "safety factor" of their containment domes.

We're talking about a very serious disaster here, and calculations might be "off"! There are so many factors involved. Only a real "test" – i.e., an earthquake – will tell for sure. But if some big chunk of concrete falls onto a major component of the reactor during a 7.5 or 7.6 earthquake or whatever, then guess what? As one former San Onofre employee put it to me once, "Katie, bar the door!" For 100,000 years.

No nuclear reactor like San Onofre has ever been required to somehow survive a major breakage in the coolant system, such as might be caused by a steam generator being knocked over or disconnected by a large chunk of concrete falling from the ceiling of the containment dome. (Times change... witness the April 2011 Fukushima earthquake and what happened at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Witness failed replacement cooling tubes permanently shutting down San Onofre in 2013. Never say never!)

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Did a nuke qualify as a real test? Or, an attack using a truckload of ANFO? Security was supposed to be tight at the 100+ reactors, ever since 9/11. September 11, 2001 was almost 6 years ago and people tend to get slack. Not at Diablo Canyon and San Onofre, they didn't, but then the terrorists used the 1kT suitcase bombs there. The last suitcase nuke they had was used at Palo Verde, which has 3 reactors.

Over in Lake Arrowhead, we were as snug as a bug in a rug. Seth had regular insulin and Humalin. The shelf life, according to the label, is about a week more than forever, until it's opened. He didn't have the high blood pressure medicine Evan took, but his substitute was better. As far as the other diabetes drugs went, he had a 100-day supply and no more. This was nice, 3 adult couples in a magnificent shelter, a freezer full of steaks and a couple of good bottles of wine.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 5

Lancaster got the radiation first and Eddie radioed as soon as the CD V-717 started to click. His signal started to fade and I told him to raise the antenna mast from its normally stowed position. Does fallout cause ionization? After a while, the airwaves were nothing but static. Seth produced a bottle of Chablis for the ladies and a 6-pack of Heineken for us. Evan and I got down to telling some serious ‘war stories’. You know, how Air Power saved the world from the Russians, etc.

Eventually our CD V-717 started to click and we knocked it off and got serious. Eddie had developed a spreadsheet for Seth’s laptop using Excel. Seth entered the radiation readings every hour and sheet automatically updated. He pressed F10 and a graph popped up giving us a visual representation of the radiation. No doubt Eddie had the same spreadsheet on his laptop over in Lancaster.

Back when Seth first brought up the shelter in our backyard and said it was company owned, I never once thought that we’d be in Lake Arrowhead in his shelter and the other employees would be in our backyard in the company shelter. It’s just as well; I didn’t have any beer or wine in my shelter.

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(If you call Humana to sign up for Medicare Part D, go to the bathroom first and bring your lunch, you’ll be on the phone for a very long time. Their music is awful!)

I began to question, ‘What are the odds?’ An avian flu outbreak was anticipated and the government’s long planning time had actually permitted them to accumulate sufficient meds to limit the outbreak. In and of itself, that was a miracle, you saw how they handled New Orleans right? Earthquakes happen every day in California, but a pair of earthquakes in the M_w 5- M_w 6 range in a single day was quite unusual. Not really, I guess, the Landers quake was M_w 7.3 and the aftershock at Big Bear was M_w 6.4. Terrorists blowing up, or trying to blow up, 20 reactors around the country most certainly wasn’t an everyday event. They only succeeded in destroying the 3 I mentioned, the others were successfully SCRAMd.

The real danger in a reactor event is loss of cooling and exposing the core; this causes overheating and the so-called China Syndrome. You saw the movie, right? Jack Lemon was fine, but old Hanoi Jane was in it. Maybe we’ll forgive her next lifetime. That’s what happened at Chernobyl, and we all know the results of that event. Three Mile Island was ok after the Prez put in an appearance. He was a nuclear engineer.

Back in 2002, James Earl Carter, Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development. Finally, he sure couldn’t get our hostages out of the Embassy. He wasn’t all bad, he lusted after a woman in his heart, remember?

I thought Osama had 13 of the Russian suitcase nukes. Maybe this attack was someone else. Do you suppose the Iranians salvaged the plutonium from their destroyed reactors and decided to take out the Israeli action on us? It appeared we'd only be in Seth and Naomi's shelter for 2 weeks max. Seth said we were 211 miles (340 km) (184 nautical miles) from Avila Beach on a heading of east-southeast, 106.4°.

San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) is a 3 unit site located ~10 miles south of San Clemente, California. He used Camp Pendleton to get the bearings and distance. It was 72 miles (115 km) (62 nautical miles) from Camp Pendleton South to Lake Arrowhead on a bearing of north, 8.5° and 66 miles (106 km) (57 nautical miles) from Camp Pendleton North to Lake Arrowhead on a bearing of north, 6.3°. It didn't appear that SONGS would be a problem with the wind out of the west.

Seth said he'd take the watch from 8am until 4pm. Evan and I could decide who would be on from 4pm to midnight and midnight until 8am. Knowing Evan the way I do, I let him choose. Evan is a really nice fella, but his temper is mean. For a man in his late 40s, you'd never know that he wasn't an athlete. He had a tough job at Edwards that involved a fair amount of lifting. And he liked to run to keep his diabetes under control. I thought he was playing with a time bomb, but he kept a box of Hershey bars nearby. He basically had everything under control but his temper. Normally he only lost it when he'd been drinking, a bad thing for a diabetic to do.

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Seth was the type of man who liked to control his money. When he got the bill from the security company for 2-armed guards for a full weekend, he grumbled and added security bars to the windows. He also added security grates to the doors. They wouldn't keep out the determined person, probably nothing would, but it was much harder to get into the store and warehouse. He also put in a permanent standby generator, selling the floor sample that we used at a discount. He powered it with a propane tank of maybe 30,000-gallons. He also added a dedicated line to the security company so they could come if anyone tried to break in. The previous setup was a dialup account and now we had a single leased line that went direct.

I would have thought that he would have taken one of the pairs from one of the T-1 line and used it for the security company. Not Seth, his thinking would get compartmentalized and then he'd go off on a tangent. Like buying those 4 mares, there were only the 2 of them, so why did he need 4? Probably just to make Rose and me miserable! Then, there was the matter of his wardrobe when he was at the cabin. He had an extensive collection of the cavalry bib shirts (\$60 each). You've seen them; John Wayne wore them in some of his movies. They have 2 rows of buttons and you can open one side and let the bib flop. He'd have looked better in Wrangler's but he went with Levis 501s. His boots weren't really fancy, but they were good quality; it was easy to tell, Tony Lama's that went for \$500 a pair. I've seen boots liked that and always passed, due to my champagne appetite and a beer budget. They carried both Wranglers and Levis and a

line of Wrangler hats. Not Seth, it had to be Stetson, El Presidente 100X at \$900 and a Senora 10X in natural straw, probably \$80. I shopped Howard and Phil's and ended up with Laredo boots. Well I did, right up until they went belly up in 1999. I guess it's been a while since I bought new boots.

The ostrich-hide cowboy boots that US Representative Howard P. "Buck" McKeon sports on Capitol Hill aren't just for show; they're part of his heritage. Before the California Republican was elected to Congress for the first time, in 1992, with his four brothers he had run a business: Howard & Phil's Western Wear, a family-owned retail chain known for its cowboy boots and attire. The company's early years also had been a struggle. In 1963 the McKeon's' parents, Howard and Phyllis, had founded the business in a sparsely populated area of California, taking out a \$20,000 mortgage on their home. "There were days when they didn't do any business at all," Buck McKeon recalls. "There were weeks when they couldn't buy groceries."

o

When the radiation died down to 50mR, we left the shelter. It wasn't that high to begin with, but better safe than sorry. Eddie had finally punched through the radiation and Seth told him to get the truck, start cleaning out the warehouse and bring everything to Lake Arrowhead. Once the stuff was in Arrowhead, they'd do some dividing up and Seth promised enough food for everyone to get by for a year.

"Here's how it is fellas," Seth announced. "I can't count on getting supplies so I figure we'd better fold up the business. I'll pay everyone anything they have coming in the way of vacation or whatever. On top of that, I give you each a one-year supply of food for your family. That will be in lieu of any notice. If you need anything else, talk to me and we'll work out something. I have Tamiflu if any of you don't."

"What are you going to do boss?" Eddie asked.

"I think I'll get my horses and go for a ride. Why, is there something you need?"

"What are you going to do with the server?"

"Hadn't given it much thought, any suggestions?"

"Well, I have enough vacation built up to buy it from you."

"Are you sure? A fat lot of good a server will do you."

"Well, pilgrim, if that's the way you're going to be," Eddie laughed, "Fill your hands, you son-of-a bitch."

"Fine, take it and quite imitating the Duke."

o

Characters in numerous other movies and television shows have made imitations of John Wayne. Easily imitated, with his signature swaggered walk, especially the use of the word “pilgrim,” and famous lines like, “fill your hands, you son-of-a-bitch,” have made their way into other performances. George Washington McClintock: “I know I’m gonna use good judgment. I haven’t lost my temper in 40 years, but pilgrim you caused a lot of trouble this morning, might have got somebody killed... and somebody oughta belt you in the mouth. But I won’t, I won’t. The hell I won’t.” Wayne used the term pilgrim twice in Liberty Valance.

“For it is written that a son of Arabia would awaken a fearsome Eagle. The wrath of the Eagle would be felt throughout the lands of Allah and lo, while some of the people trembled in despair still more rejoiced: for the wrath of the Eagle cleansed the lands of Allah and there was peace.” That verse is number 9.11 of the Qur’an.

You know what this is, don’t you? “For the wrath of the Eagle cleansed the lands of Allah and there was peace.” Wishful thinking. We’re not quite as crazy as they are.

Open Microsoft Word and do the following:

1. Type in capitals Q33 NY. This is the flight number of the first plane to hit one of the Twin Towers.
2. Highlight the Q33 NY.
3. Change the font size to 48.
4. Change the actual font to the WINGDINGS

What you will get is a jet airplane, 2 boxes that look like towers, a space, a skull and crossbones and the Star of David.



o

It was just a good thing that Eddie was joking; Seth was wearing his Paladin rig. What now? Well, I’ll tell you, this is the aftermath. Avian flu was still around but apparently not a problem. They cleaned up after the two earthquakes and FEMA said they were on their way to help out California. God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

“What now? If you’re closing the business do you suppose I could have my gold from your safe?”

“It’s in good hands, Joe.”

“Maybe so, Seth, but I’m out of a job and you know hard it is to get a job when you’re pushing 50.”

“Promise not to spend it all in one place?”

“No.”

“Then why should I give it to you?”

“Because Evan is a faster draw than you are?”

“Good point. Do you think he’d like a beer?”

“He’s still paying for the 2 he drank the day the reactors blew up. He’s just brimming with nervous energy after being cooped up for 2 weeks.”

“What are you going to spend the money on?”

“Horses?”

“I have 4, you don’t need any.”

“Evan and Marie don’t have horses.”

“I’ll give you your gold, but I’ll also buy 2 horses for Evan and Marie. It’s hard to say when FEMA will make an appearance. Say, do you have any extra gas?”

“Just what is in my tanks.”

“How much is that?”

“Maybe 50 gallons.”

“Well, I have plenty of diesel but no gas. Any suggestions?”

“Do you know where we can get some empty drums?”

“How many?”

“What difference does it make?”

“I have some in the garage.”

“Really? How many?”

“Six. That’s space for 330-gallons of gas.”

“Evan, let’s load up the drums and go find some gas.”

You know how it is, right? You need gas and you have drums and gold coin to pay for it. There is one gas station in Lake Arrowhead, Cedar Glen Gas Stop. Big Bear City has one too, B&M Petroleum. Big Bear Lake has 5, Arco, Ralph Haupt’s, Moonridge Fuel, Ultramar and Shell. There are also stations in Rimforest and Running Springs, one each for a total of 9. I knew we didn’t have electricity in Lake Arrowhead and I believe it probably all comes off the same power lines. At least with Evan driving, I wouldn’t be burning up my gas just to find more. I looked at the map and determined that it was Cedar Glen or nothing. It was 8 miles to Running Springs and 23 miles to Big Bear Lake.

“If you can’t get gas in Cedar Glen, try Rimforest, it’s only 4 miles.” Seth advised.

“Where can you get horses?”

“At Baldwin Lake Stables, southeast of Big Bear City. We have to go down there and bring back my horses anyway. Why?”

“If we have to go after gas, why don’t we kill 2 birds with one stone?”

“Are you sure that you aren’t Jewish?”

“I don’t know; what does a Jew look like?”

Apparent that went over like a fart in church. We put the 6 drums in Evan’s pickup and got our military firearms. Seth gave me the gold and brought some of his to buy 2 more horses. We stopped in Big Bear City and got gas to fill the drums. Ultramar always has the lowest prices and that guy had a portable 3-phase generator to keep his pumps going. He had jacked the price to \$2.999 a gallon but he didn’t have a limit. You could get all the gas you wanted if you had cash, gold or silver. I think we were the first person he’d sold any gas to. Tit for tat, I gave him a ½ ounce Eagle. Seth had discussed the price of gold on the way over and he speculated that it would hit \$2,000 an ounce. The man held out his hand and said, “That’s half.” What the hell by the time it hit \$2,000 an ounce, the guy would be out of gas or charging \$6 a gallon.

“How are we going to haul the horses?”

“With a trailer, how did you expect?”

“I don’t think so,” Evan said.”

“Why not?”

“330 gallons of gas weighs about 2,000 pounds. I’m already down on the frame as it is. If we’re going to pull a trailer, Seth, we’ll have to go back to your place and unload the drums.” (6.2*330 = 2,046 and premium weighs more)

“Go ahead to the stables, they can deliver.”

I’ll bet Seth was thinking he could buy 2 horses for 4 ounces of gold. Hah! By the time he had paid for the horses and 2 saddles, he was out 9 ounces. They’d deliver the horses if he could give them fuel, but only because he’d stabled the horses there for a while. Oh, yeah, there was the matter of feed. Seth didn’t have any because he kept his horses at the stable. Is \$4 a bale too much to pay for hay? Yeah, I thought so too. And some people call horses, hay burners. Anyone who could pop for \$250 for dinner for 4 at the Odyssey could afford \$4 hay.

“Get lost?”

“Not hardly, but that’s a ton of gas and we went to the stables.” I explained.

“How high was gas?”

“Not really too bad, \$3.”

“Did you get the horses?”

“They’re delivering them, Naomi, along with a truckload of hay.”

“What did the hay run?”

“\$4.”

“\$4!!! \$2 a bale is a fair price, \$3 tops. There about 40 bales to the ton and the going price is \$80 a ton.”

“Don’t yell at me, I didn’t buy the hay.”

“My husband sometimes thinks he’s Wyatt Earp.”

“The last time I looked, he was Doc Holliday.”

“Boy Toys!” Naomi complained. “How much hay did he buy?”

“200 bales.”

“Why?”

“I’m not sure, because that was all their truck would hold?”

“Men!”

This was going well. 6 hours out of the shelter and Seth was already up to his ass in alligators. Evan and I made ourselves scarce by unloading the 6 drums of gas. I looked in the garage and found a 1-liter barrel pump. This would be fun, refilling the gas tank. Six gallons is a little less than 23 liters. Filling both tanks would require 212 cycles of the pump. On the other hand, it beat walking. We added a length of plastic hose and used that to reach my tank. It only took 24 turns, not bad.

o

“Did you get the gas unloaded?”

“Yes, did you get the hay unloaded?”

“Ouch, you really know how to hurt a guy. I may not be able to sit for a week.”

“I take it you don’t normal pay the bills.”

“Naomi pays the bills and I guess I should have asked her what the price of hay was.”

“Where else around here could you have bought Hay?”

“I have no idea, why?”

“They can’t really grow hay in the mountains so I’d speculate they have to truck it in from someplace like the Antelope Valley. It might go for \$80 a ton like Naomi said, but that would be picked up in Palmdale. It may cost them a dollar a bale to get it delivered, who knows. And like you said, where else could you have found it. She’d have probably paid \$4 a bale too.”

“When was the last time I gave you a raise?”

“Do you mean before you fired me this morning? I can’t really remember.”

“I didn’t fire you *per se*; consider it a change in assignment.”

“Change to what?”

“Naomi and I, by ourselves, are on pretty shaky ground. On the other hand if you and Evan wanted to stay here, at least for a while, we’d be more secure.”

“Seth I have a job to get back to at Edwards,” Evan protested.

“Do you? Do you really? Where is Edwards from Lancaster? East isn’t it?”

“Yes, so?”

“If the Antelope Valley was awash in radiation, what about Edwards? I’ll fancy it got hit pretty good.”

“I should at least try to call. Oh, I can’t do that because the phones are out. In that case, maybe I’d better drive up to Edwards and check on my job.”

“Fine with me, but when you find yourself unemployed, will you work for me?”

“As a guard?”

“As a guard.”

“Guard work doesn’t pay very well.”

“I’ll pay you and Joe exactly the same as I paid him before as the Assistant Manager of Rim of the World Preparedness.”

“Is that good?”

“Take it Evan; it’s the best offer you’ll get in a very long time. Me too, Seth.”

“Fine, the two of you drive up to Edwards tomorrow and check out Evan’s job. You might want to swing by you homes and pick up anything you forgot.”

o

“He seems pretty sure of himself.”

“Twenty years ago, they had airmen doing what you do now, Evan. Maybe the government will cut costs by laying people off.”

“Yeah, I suppose. Well we both have our pensions so if Seth pays a decent wage, we’ll probably be better off.”

“Don’t forget, it includes room and board. That gold he gave me out of his safe was bonus money he gave me but never paid me. Instead, he converted it into gold at \$300 an ounce.”

“I wondered why you had gold in his safe.”

"I got \$1,000 an ounce at the gas station so I tripled my money and never even touched it."

"There for a minute, he acted like he wasn't going to give you the gold. Is he always like that?"

"Sometimes Seth is really strange when it comes to money. He'll take us out on the town and drop \$250 at the Odyssey and then cut corners the following Monday. He put in that shelter in our backyard and then when the time came to use it, he filled it with his other employees and had us come over here."

"How big is it?"

"10'x50'."

"How big is the shelter under his house?"

"36'x44'."

"So he had 20 people in 500ft² and the 6 of us in 1,584ft²?"

"Right, see what I mean? I offered to buy Marie and you horses, but he had to put on a show and buy them himself."

"I haven't been on a horse since I was 18 years old."

"Rose rode a few times in high school, but I'd never been on a horse until she took us and got lessons."

"What to learn about riding a horse?"

"How to not fall off. The really strange thing is that we bought those rifle scabbards never once thinking we'd ever use them."

"I guess I did too. I bought the Winchesters to complement my shooting gear and carried them in scabbards. Never once had them on a horse. So what's the deal, are we cowboys or soldiers?"

"Either, both, I don't really know. I suppose it depends on what Seth dresses up in."

"I think I saw that movie, what was its name?"

"*Heartbreak Ridge.*"

In the Aftermath – Chapter 6

“Right, Clint Eastwood as a has been Marine.”

“I wouldn’t say that to a Marine’s face if I were you. Once a Marine, always a Marine. Remember Highway’s slogan in the movie?”

“*Improvise. Adapt. Overcome?*”

“Right, I think that we’re going to be doing a lot of that in the coming days.”

“Are you expecting trouble?”

“Well, if we’re looking for FEMA to come and bail us out, I say we’re in for a disappointment. Remember how they botched New Orleans?”

“But they forced Brown out.”

“Chertoff is still there. Did you get the bit about border security?”

“No, what was that?”

The Secure Border Initiative (SBI) is a comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America’s borders and reduce illegal migration. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has announced an overall vision for the SBI, which includes:

- More agents to patrol our borders, secure our ports of entry and enforce immigration laws;
- Expanded detention and removal capabilities to eliminate “catch and release” once and for all;
- A comprehensive and systemic upgrading of the technology used in controlling the border, including increased manned aerial assets, expanded use of UAVs, and next-generation detection technology;
- Increased investment in infrastructure improvements at the border – providing additional physical security to sharply reduce illegal border crossings; and
- Greatly increased interior enforcement of our immigration laws – including more robust worksite enforcement.

Under SBI, our goal is to have operational control of both the northern and southern borders within five years.

- The President recently signed the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill into law, which included an 11% increase for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, bringing total

funding to more than \$7 billion – funds that will enable us to increase our physical presence at the border by hiring an additional 1,000 Border Patrol agents. With these new hires, Border Patrol will increase by nearly 3,000 agents since 9/11.

- The Homeland Security Appropriations Bill also includes roughly \$3.9 billion in total funding for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) this fiscal year, a 9% increase over last year. Included are significant funding increases for ICE criminal investigators, detention beds, fugitive operations teams, and Immigration Enforcement agents.

- The increased funding will allow ICE to add roughly 250 new criminal investigators to better target the human smuggling organizations and other criminal groups that exploit our nation's borders. It will also allow ICE to add 400 new Immigration Enforcement Agents and 100 new Deportation Officers.

“And Bush wants to make them legal, doesn't he?”

“That's what I heard, but the last thing he said on the subject was, 'I'll tell you another big idea. We've got to do something about our immigration laws. Our obligation is to secure the borders. We've got to make sure that – we've got to make sure that we have the resources and technologies available for our Border Patrol agents. We've got to make sure we have a focused strategy to prevent people, goods, drugs, whatever, being smuggled in this country. That's one of our duties. And I meet with Chertoff quite frequently – he's the head of the Homeland Security. We do talk about how best to modernize the border security. One way to protect this border is to recognize that people are sneaking in here to work. And I believe that if you are a willing employer – in other words, if you have somebody looking for work and you can't find an American, there ought to be a legal way – not an illegal way – a legal way for you to be able to employ that person.’”

“How do you know all of the stuff you know?”

“I know nothing! On the other hand, I surf the World Wide Web.”

“About the only thing I use it for is emails. And only that because my job requires it.”

“Former job and I'll bet they didn't buy the computer, did they?”

“No, but I bought it through Base Exchange so it didn't cost so much. Here we are, let me pull out my ID pass.”

“Help you gentlemen?”

“Here's my ID pass, airman. I just came to check on my job.”

“Sir, by order of the President, all military installations are closed to civilians, including those who worked here. You should have gotten a notice terminating your employment. Did you not receive it, sir?”

“Haven’t been home, but we only got out of the shelter yesterday.”

“Sorry sir, but I’ll have to confiscate your pass.”

“That’s it? No – thank you but sorry? What about my accumulated leave and such?”

“Sir it is my understanding that the notice included a check for any monies to which you are entitled. You can pull past the shack to turn around.”

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“How do you like that? He did everything but say, *Dismissed*. I sure hope that Seth’s offer is still open.”

“It will be, he really needs help to guard his cabin. Do you want to go to your place or mine first?”

“Mine is closest, so go there first.”

Evan and Marie have nice little 3-bedroom house on Lancaster’s north side. We loaded his extra ammo, their clothes and emptied the refrigerator and freezer into the trashcan. The food was fairly ripe and Evan opened a box of baking soda to draw out some of the stink. From the back of his closet, he brought out a cash box.

“I’ve never trusted banks and we only keep enough in our account to cover the checks we write. Marie and I have been on a cash basis for as long as I can remember. Do you suppose cash is still good, Joe?”

“I don’t see why not, it’s not the end of the world. It might be the end of California and Arizona for a while, but as far as I know, the government is still intact.”

“I think that’s it. Let’s get to your place.”

Rose and I live on the west side in an older neighborhood. It was only about 10 minutes away and there wasn’t any traffic. All I really needed was more clothes; we’d brought everything else. I grabbed my straw hat, my dress boots and an extra coat for Rose. Then I hit the dresser drawers and just emptied hers into a suitcase. I grabbed my extra jeans, shirts, drawers, t-shirts and socks. I figured I’d better grab her jewel box too. I wasn’t sure what she’d want to wear, dresses or slacks and blouses so I just got both. I can’t explain it, but men and women think differently. I’d read something on the WWW way back when that claimed men and women used different parts of their brains for the same tasks. It had been a study done using stimulation and MRIs. Their brains worked

faster than ours and they used less computing power for the same tasks. I'm sure the researchers were wrong, but they didn't claim that women were smarter, just that they thought differently.

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"What did you do?" Rose asked. "Dump the dresser drawers into the suitcase?"

"Yeah, why?"

"You could have packed the things."

"We were in a hurry."

"I can tell, it shows. Did you bring my jewel box?"

"Yes, dear. I even remembered to get your things from the bathroom."

"Did you bring me dresses or slacks and blouses?"

"Both, we've only been married 27 years; I still don't understand how you think."

"Dresses are for dress up and slacks and blouses for every day."

"Yes dear."

I'll have to say that Rose looked pretty good in a pair of tight fitting blue jeans. She didn't have a massive chest, but she had a very nice figure, properly proportioned. In guy talk: more than a handful. This wearing a Colt SAA all the time was going to take some getting used to. Seth seemed to have bought out the store on the cavalry bib shirts so we were going to be cowboys until he switched to BDUs. Evan had a FAL rifle, a SA-58 from DSA Arms and a M1911. Marie had a Browning Hi-Power and an AR-15. The thing was, this was California and very few Assault type weapons were legal. Most certainly not the rifles Evan and Marie owned. Neither were ours as far as that goes. I'd replaced the compensator on my Super Match with the original flash hider it was supposed to come with. And, California had outlawed the .50BMG caliber rifles not long after I'd sunk \$17 grand into mine.

I'd told you that I had 2 sniper rifles; the McMillan and the Super Match and I believe that I mentioned I had a pair of scopes for each. I had very good Nightforce scopes, an NXS 8-32x56mm with a MUNS and a NXS 12-42x56mm each turned to the rifle they went on. So far, I only had Hornady 750gr A-MAX Match. Not cheap! To the best of my knowledge, nobody had suppressors for any of their weapons, other than me. And, all of the weapons, as far as I know, weren't capable of full auto or burst. In the years since Vietnam, the US military had moved away from the concept of having riflemen, except

for the Marines, and taught different tactics. That was probably because they hadn't had a real rifle since McNamara got rid of the M14s.

Seth had 2 of every gun he owned. Half of the guns in his safes were illegal in California, maybe more. I suppose in his own way, he was like Ronnie Barrett, Seth believed in the 2nd Amendment. Big time! Barrett manufactures a variety of firearms and there are different designations for the weapons, depending on who the customer is. For example, the M82A1 is designated as an M107 for the military and LEOs.

I'd often wonder just where Seth came up with some of the guns in his collection; some of them were brought out after California began banning weapons. He'd moved his 2 Fort Knox gun safes to the shelter sometime after he'd shown the shelter to me. His safes were the Titan series and other than the Yeager series, Fort Knox didn't build a better gun safe.

Back in May in the midst of our really busy time, I'd called the Phoenix dealer had had gotten another 800 rounds of .50 caliber ammo all in the same lot number. For my Super Match, I'd gone first class and purchased ammo from Black Hills, the 175gr BTHP. Considering how much I'd spent on the Kimbers, I'd selected Speer Gold Dot 200gr +P ammo for them and their 158-grain JHP in the .357 magnum for Rose. We used Lawman for practice. Evan had some of that Australian surplus for his FALs and standard military ball ammo in his M1911s.

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July 20, 2007...

We had come out of the shelter on the 18th and gone to Edwards and Lancaster on the 19th. Today, according to the calendar, was Friday. I had checked the freezer in the shelter and the fellas had pretty much cleaned it out. What was left had gone into a couple of coolers for transport back to Seth and Naomi's. Evan and I put straps around my house freezer and just loaded it onto the pickup with my 2-wheeler. We had also gotten whatever was left of the food in the shelter, not much, and my two-year supply from the house. It was actually more than a two-year supply because we had the other things besides what I had from Walton's.

We had a nice breakfast because Naomi said her eggs were getting old and had to be used up. That answered my question of whether or not Seth and she kept Kosher. Unless there is some new process to make bacon Kosher that I didn't know about, I guess not. The dietary laws evolved at a time in history where they were important. They basically kept you from being killed by the food you ate. In a modern age, they were more of a tradition than a need.

"How are we going to get the propane out of your tank and transferred over here?"

“You have 13,000-gallons why would you need to transfer the propane? Sure we can find someone to deliver fuel if you need it, you can pay in gold.”

“I can pay in cash, too, but I hate leaving a full load of propane in Lancaster.”

“We’ll probably need it when we get back if the power isn’t on. If you want, Evan and I can go looking for a propane dealer.”

“Try AmeriGas in Yucca Valley, that’s my regular supplier.”

“But, do you need gas? You have the same generator that we have in Lancaster. In 16 days, you could have only used a maximum of 800 gallons.”

“I don’t believe we used that much, more like 500-gallons.”

“Seth, I could be wrong, but I believe you have a full year supply of propane, maybe more. Evan and I can drive down to Yucca Valley and see if there is anyone at the AmeriGas dealer, but where would you put extra fuel if we could get it?”

“Still. I’ll ride along and see if I can’t prepay for at least one delivery.”

“Whatever. Listen, it’s not like the Chinese or the Russians attacked the US. From radio reports, terrorists attacked 20 reactors and only succeeded in destroying 3, the 2 here in California and Palo Verde. I’m sure they will bring all of the power generating stations online and ration electricity. Some of those manufacturing companies use as much power as a small town. If you’re really worried about it, you should get AmeriGas to move the tank from the store. That’s a 10,000-gallon tank and you said you were shutting down operations. We can even bring the generator and use it as a backup. I brought my Chevy back from Lancaster so we’ll have 2 pickups and a trailer to use.”

“I have a trailer for the Hummer, so we’ll have 2 trailers.”

“We’ll still have to talk to AmeriGas about moving that tank, is it a rental or did you buy it?”

“I had to buy it; they refused to supply a 10k tank for a small business for a backup generator. I had to buy that 5,000-gallon tank in Lancaster, too. You know how they work; they won’t rent you a tank that holds more fuel than you can use in a year.”

“I say the only problems we have to solve are getting the tank moved and emptying the store,” I suggested.

“I own the building in Santa Clarita so we can take our time clearing the place out. The fellas moved most of the inventory anyway. I’m mainly interested in getting my records so I can do the tax returns. How in the hell do they expect me to deposit the employee withholding with all of the banks closed?”

I hadn't even thought about that. The state and the feds only give you so many days, depending on the amount, in which to make deposits of the taxes you withhold from employees. We had been in the shelter from July 4th to July 18th. Seth had deposited the withholding from the employees on July 2nd and he wouldn't have to make a deposit now except for the fact that he withheld when he paid everyone off. However, until someone opened a bank, that was impossible. With no phones, there wasn't any way to call someone and ask, either.

A 20# propane cylinder hold 5-gallons so I'd guess that propane weighs about 4# per gallon. If the tank at the store contained 9,000-gallons, that was 18 tons of propane plus the weight of the tank. It would take a crane to lift the tank onto a flat bed and unload it once we got it here. Hopefully we could avoid unloading and refilling the tank.

The folks at AmeriGas in Yucca Valley were in and yes, they could move the tank, for a price. And, yes, they could top everything off once the new tank and been moved and was in place. And, yes, they had the tank stanchions for a 10,000-gallon tank that they could haul to Lake Arrowhead and install. For a price! I thought Seth was going to pop a gasket when he heard the prices. Still, it was cheaper than buying a new tank, had it been available, and buying another 9,000-gallons of propane. I told you he was funny about money. I wonder if they've reopened the Odyssey?

However, they couldn't do the job until Monday the 23rd. Seth said as long as we were out and about and were pulling the trailers, we might just as well go to Santa Clarita and clean out the store. The 3 of us could go back on Monday and maybe by then, there would be a bank open so he could deposit the withholding. The late filing penalties could be deducted on the tax return. Here we are trying to survive in the aftermath of a terrorist attack and he's worried about his damned taxes.

It was decided to just bring things we could use back to Lake Arrowhead and store the remaining things, other than the records, right there in the store for now. We loaded the records first, just to smooth the waters. Then we got what remained of the battery and flashlight supply. Finally, we got some of the other survival items, but left things like the extra gas masks and so forth at the store. We brought the MREs just in case we had to bug out from Lake Arrowhead, but for the life of me I couldn't conceive of needing to leave.

I suppose the reason that I couldn't was because of the amount of food we had accumulated there at the cabin. Even passing out 18 one-year supplies of food, we probably had another 15 on top of what was left of the 16 years' worth of food Seth had in the beginning. And, you'll have to remember, this was survival food, not what we regularly ate. It didn't matter because we wouldn't go hungry and as long as the meat held out, we were good to go.

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Monday, July 23rd...

We took off early because AmeriGas hadn't said when on Monday they'd pick up the tank. The closest we could pin them down was that they pick it up by noon. There were a lot more cars out and about so apparently people had somehow managed to survive Diablo Canyon and San Onofre with little trouble. On a map, Diablo is straight west of Bakersfield and San Onofre is south of San Clemente where Nixon had his western White House. By in large, I'd say that most of LA and the Inland Empire had avoided much of the contamination. We didn't see any sign of any FEMA people, but that was no big surprise. Bush had made an address to the nation on Friday night and said that FEMA and troops were being mobilized for a cleanup, whatever that meant.

I'm here to tell you that I don't believe it meant much. They were still fighting over rebuilding New Orleans and here we were in late July 2 years later. The folks down in Louisiana want a category 5 levee system all on the federal dime. Translated, that means that you and I are going to have to pay for those people to live in what used to be a swamp. I might be willing to be graceful about that if they'd be willing to raise ground level in New Orleans about 30' like they did in Seattle.

You knew that Seattle wasn't the only underground city in the US, right? Want a list? Well, there's Atlanta, Georgia, Chicago, Illinois, Crystal City, Virginia, Havre, Montana, Dallas, Texas, Houston, Texas, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Rochester, Minnesota, Seattle, Washington and Rochester, New York. If you go around the world, you'll find underground cities in the following countries: Australia, Canada, China, Taiwan, Finland, Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, Singapore, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States. The largest underground city in the world is Montreal.

They showed up at noon and within an hour, we were east bound and down. The semi didn't travel really fast because the tank wasn't full and it could slosh. It wasn't that the load was heavy, probably less than 20 tons, but when the driver turned corners, he had to go very slowly. They also had a flag pickup leading the parade, but I don't know why. Probably just so they could charge Seth more. We got back to Arrowhead around 3pm and there was the crane waiting to set the tank and a delivery truck, which had already topped off the 3,000 and 10,000-gallon tanks. They topped off the tank from the store and Seth forked over cash for their services, grumbling under his breath the entire time.

If you think about it, they had a crane, a lowboy, 2 drivers, a delivery truck and driver tied up for most of the day. Seth should just be happy; he now has an extra 95% of 30,000-gallons of propane. That's enough propane to run the generator at full power for more than a year and at half power for nearly 2 years. Evan and I spent the remainder of the day connecting the new tank into Seth's pipe system. The new tank and the small tank both had shutoff valves so we could run only on the buried tank.

We listened to the news on TV to see if there was any trouble around southern California. We assumed that with the power and phones out, some people might take ad-

vantage of the situation. It wasn't all that bad. Early on, there has been some looting in LA, but after all the practice the LAPD had not containing riots in the past, this time they got it right. I'd perceived that that Chief Bratton would have a handle on rioting. The only person ever to serve as chief executive of both the LAPD and the NYPD, Chief Bratton established an international reputation for reengineering police departments and fighting crime in the 1990s.

Apparently he had a new policy to deal with riots, shoot first... Apparently he'd adopted some of the practice of Chief Davis who had formed such things as the gun squad. LA had 3 major riots in its history, the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, the Watts Riots of 1965 and the Rodney King Riots of 1992. King made an appearance before television news cameras to plead for peace, saying, "Can we get along here? Can we all get along?" King's remark is often misquoted, sometimes sarcastically, as "Can't we all just get along?"

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A History Lesson...

When Darryl and Sims entered the 7-Eleven, Owens put the broom and dust pan down and followed them into the store. Williams and Coward followed Owens into the store. (TT 2146-2152). As Darryl and Sims walked to the counter area to take money from the register, Williams walked behind Owens and told him "shut up and keep walking." (TT 2154). While pointing a shotgun at Owens' back, Williams directed him to a back storage room. (TT 2154).

Once inside the storage room, Williams, at gunpoint, ordered Owens to "lay down, m*therf*cker." Williams then chambered a round into the shotgun. Williams then fired the round into the security monitor. Williams then chambered a second round and fired the round into Owens' back as he lay face down on the floor of the storage room. Williams then fired again into Owens' back. (TT 2162).

According to court transcripts at approximately 5:00am on March 11, 1979, Stanley Williams entered the Brookhaven Motel at 10411 South Vermont Avenue. After entering the public lobby area, Williams broke down the door that led to the private office. Once inside the private office, Williams, using his shotgun, killed 76-year-old Yen-I Yang; Williams also killed Yang's wife, sixty-three year old Tsai-Shai Yang; lastly, Williams killed Yang's daughter, 43-year-old Yee-Chen Lin. Williams then removed the currency from the cash register and fled the location.

Robert Yang, son of Yen-Yi and Tsai-Shai, was asleep with his wife in their bedroom at the Brookhaven Motel when he was woken by the sound of somebody breaking down the door to the motel's office. This sound was immediately followed by the sound of his mother or sister screaming, followed by gun shots. When Robert entered the motel office he found his mother, his sister, and his father had all been shot. Robert observed that the cash register was open and money was missing. It was later determined that

the robbery of the Brookhaven Motel and the murder of the three members of the Yang family netted Stanley Williams approximately one hundred dollars.

I know one person for sure who favors the death penalty and thinks that they wait too darned long to get it over with.

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Tuesday, July 24th...

...was the day after Monday, July 23rd. We busied ourselves sorting through all the supplies we'd brought from Rim of the World Preparedness. The MREs were consigned to the basement to keep them at an even temperature. I hadn't thought that we had that many at the warehouse, but we could live on MREs for months. As far as those deluxe one-year food supplies went, we were good forever, or so it seemed. 31 one-year supplies less the food we'd consumed since the 4th of July, which didn't really even make a dent.

Once we had everything where Seth wanted it, we decided to pull out the firearms and ammo and see where we stood. I had about 1,200 rounds of the .50cal, 10,000-rounds of surplus for my 2 HK91s, at least 1,500-rounds of Black Hills 175gr BTHP. There wasn't a weapon in Rose and my collection that we didn't have 1,000-rounds for. Evan had 5 cases of Aussie Surplus, 4,000-rounds, but he only had 1,000 rounds for Marie's AR. He had 500 rounds each of .45 and 9mm ball. About half of the ammo he had for the .45s was cowboy ammo and the remainder was full powered ammo, maybe 1,000 rounds of each.

I told you that Seth had 10,000-rounds for every long arm and 2,000-rounds for every handgun, right? Seth had a lot of guns and we couldn't shoot up the ammo we had in one lifetime. He surprised me when he came up with the pair Barrett rifles. I hadn't thought that Barrett sold those to anyone except the US government. Seth called them his tank killers'. I don't know that I would go quite that far, but I wouldn't want to be in a Hummer, even uparmored, if someone were shooting at me with one of those M109s. And, Seth didn't have 10,000-rounds of ammo for those rifles for several reasons, not the least of which was the cost per round.

"Where did you get those?"

"The rifles or the ammo?"

In the Aftermath – Chapter 7

“Take your pick, I thought they were military only.”

“Technically the rifles aren’t but the ammo is. You can own a rifle but the Mk 211 are destructive devices controlled by the NFA. The rifle is just a hunk of metal without the ammo. It’s a heavy SOB, 33+ pounds without ammo. The .50 caliber Barrett Model 82A1/XM107 produces modest recoil energy. The weapon operating mechanism combined with an efficient muzzle brake reduces recoil energy to about 36 foot-pounds. The suppressed version of the Model 82A1/XM107 produces significantly greater recoil energy than the muzzle brake variant of the 82A1/XM107, and is also a good candidate for recoil reduction efforts.”

“The M107 is the .50 caliber upper?”

“Right, want to see one, I have 2?”

“What don’t you have?”

“I don’t have anything that can’t be classified as a shoulder weapon or and hand weapon.”

“What’s that in the case?”

“Oh, the Army decided that the M107 needed a can.”

“Will that work on an M82?”

Sure, same barrel as my M107. Don’t worry, Joe, I have extras. I have cans for all of my guns.”

“When did you get those?”

“Do you recall how I used to have my guns safes in the basement and later moved them to the shelter?”

“After Christmas of 2006?”

“Right. I got the M107s around then with the suppressor; I decided all of my weapons should have suppressors. You know how I sometimes get carried away, right? The suppressors were cheaper by the dozen.”

“Do you have all calibers?”

“Never go half way. I have threaded barrels that will work in your Kimbers and Evan’s M1911. I even have a barrel for a Browning Hi-Power, although at the time, I didn’t real-

ize that Marie carried the Hi-Power. I like my Colt revolvers but, in a fight, they're a bitch to reload quickly."

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"Honey I think that Seth is prepared for World War III."

"Why would you say that, Joe?"

"Look around you. A cabin up in the mountains with a bomb shelter underneath that is fit for a king. Today he came dragging out a suppressed M107."

"Speak English, please."

"Sorry. Barrett rifle modified the M107 and has a suppressor."

"I read about that, wasn't it also supposed to have a thermobaric round?"

"Maybe, but I don't know. Anyway, that crackpot bought suppressors, apparently by the cart full. We can silence all of our weapons."

"You'll write me from San Quentin, right?"

"Of course. And I'm sure that Evan will keep in touch with Marie."

"Just as long as you don't keep in touch with Marie."

"Have I ever, in all the years ever once given you a reason to think that way?"

"You haven't I'll admit that, but you keep your eyes on me and off of Evan's wife."

Where in the love of God did that come from? Maybe I'd have to look closer and find out.

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I read with some significant disgust the account by Dr. Scott Delacroix of his experiences following Hurricane Katrina. It is unfounded accusations, such as his, that stir equally unfounded unrest. His claims that FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] was nowhere to be found were solely because he did not look. Less than a mile away from the I-10/Causeway staging area where he was, was a huge FEMA operation, of which I was a part. In fact, the people coming his way were the very ones who my medics and I triaged – all 1700 of them on Wednesday. There is no doubt that fault can be found anywhere one looks at the aftermath of this disaster, including at the state and local government of the State of Louisiana.

If Dr. Delacroix would bother to refer to the National Response Plan, he would have found that it was not FEMA's sole responsibility to rescue New Orleans, but in fact it is the responsibility first of local and state officials. But having said that, does Dr. Delacroix realize that FEMA had 4 urban search and rescue (USAR) teams on the ground (in potential harm's way) before the storm even made landfall, and that there was a Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) in Baton Rouge? Within 2 days, more USAR teams were working frantically throughout the flooded areas to rescue those who chose not to heed the evacuation order and were now stranded. And 7 more DMAT teams were at the New Orleans International Airport trying to treat the thousands brought their way.

The statement that no medical assistance was available other than Dr. Delacroix's is entirely untrue, for on the other side of the bridge from where I was triaging (and treating) victims coming off the boats at the rate of 5-20 per boat, was a full treatment tent staffed by the Texas Task Force-1 USAR team. Near the end of the day, many of those refugees were patients from a hospital that should have been evacuated before the storm, not after.

Although communication is always our biggest problem during disaster responses, transportation was a large one in New Orleans. However, to once again blame FEMA is a little out of line. First, where is FEMA supposed to get these vehicles? Those who were able to be driven were either gone or already being driven by others. We used our own vehicles to transport people. Where do you think all those helicopters came from that were transporting people? They certainly weren't from China. There had to be a limit on how far one was willing to let a helicopter, bus, or van go and be out of service. The original destination was Baton Rouge, which seemed reasonable until that city's population swelled. And what hospital do you think should have received all of these patients?

As for "pulling out" on Thursday, FEMA has an obligation to protect the people who leave their families and jobs to respond to disasters, such as New Orleans. Although there may not have been gunfire at the I-10/Causeway site, there certainly was throughout much of the rest of the city, as related to us the next day by the surviving locals and evidenced by the overturned, burning vehicles and buildings. The lawlessness of the citizens of New Orleans is what prevented FEMA from continuing operations on Thursday, not the inadequacies of FEMA.

Every USAR team and every DMAT team in the United States was deployed to either Louisiana or Mississippi. Those teams did a tremendous amount of work and should be very proud of the thousands of people they rescued and the countless thousands more they assisted. The helicopter pilots and crews that flew day and night evacuating victims and delivering food and water to those still stranded should be similarly admired. And to the FEMA employees and officials, who worked far beyond what anyone should be expected to work, and who did a very good job at responding to the largest level of destruction that this country has ever seen, should go nothing but accolades. And to none should go the slander propagated by Dr. Delacroix.

David Shatz, MD

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I want to thank you for publishing Dr. Delacroix's account of his efforts in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He and his colleagues did a heroic job trying to help patients in that disaster.

I am writing because I feel a need to clear up a misconception that I believe Dr. Delacroix was operating under during those days: The misconception was that FEMA would supply the medical/healthcare resources that he needed to help his patients. First, FEMA is not a first responder agency. Their assistance has to be requested by state authorities. Local and then state resources are the first to respond to any disaster. Second, FEMA does not do healthcare. They are emergency managers and disaster recovery experts. They do not have medical resources.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a stockpile of medical supplies for disasters called the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). In times of disaster, the governor of the affected state can request deployment of the SNS. Once approval has been given for deployment, the initial package (called a Push Pack) will arrive at the prearranged place in the affected state within 12 hours.

What that means is that in any disaster, local and state resources must be sufficient to last 24 to 48 hours.

It is the role of state and local governments to establish plans and systems for developing surge capacity both in terms of facilities and personnel (e.g., physicians, nurses, mental health, etc.). Since 9/11, CDC and the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have funded cooperative agreements with all 50 states to put such systems in place in the event of a terrorist incident. These same systems can also be used in the event of a natural disaster.

There will never be a perfect response. Any disaster is just that – a disaster. A disaster can overwhelm our collective ability to respond quickly and appropriately. However, local, state, and federal government entities along with public health and the healthcare community working together have made great strides in being prepared to deal with a disaster, whether it is a man-made one or a natural one.

I believe that it was important for readers of Medscape to read Dr. Delacroix's story. I certainly was moved by it. It is equally important that readers (and Dr. Delacroix) understand how these systems work so that they can maximize their own contributions and hold the appropriate entities accountable.

That is my opinion.

Thank you.

James F. Koval, MDiv, MPA

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I was moved to tears, and then absolute horror, by Dr. Delacroix's agonizing tale of triage and attempts to care during the early days after Katrina. God bless his efforts and steely determination. I am left with brutal disappointment. This is America! How does this happen in the richest country in the world? Where was FEMA for those many days? Why do we hear, even now, weeks later, of "Third-World conditions" in some of the hurricane-ravaged areas? As a healthcare professional (I'm a recently retired RN [registered nurse] who spent 40 years caring for fellow Americans), I am appalled and dumbfounded that we seem so totally unprepared to respond to the wrath of nature that can and does happen. Lord help us if something really unexpected happens, terrorist- or natural disaster-related. Here we've been supposedly "preparing" for new millennium healthcare emergencies. Healthcare professionals need to demand that all our citizens be considered in planning for the potential crises that can/will occur in our ever changing, ever more politically violent world. Or we will perish! The current "just a theory" stance on bird flu is an example. Where are the international experts while the possible crisis looms?

Nedra M. Hickson, RN (Equal Time)

They were responding to this: Dr. Delacroix keeps asking the same question, a variation of the theme, where is FEMA? That's the probably the same question Williams was thinking when they had trouble finding a vein to administer the lethal injection. I thought Dr. David Shatz answered the question rather well. They were there doing the best that they could.

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I didn't look closer because you know Evan's temper. We might be friends for most of our lives, but that man sometimes acts like he's jealous. And not only is he in better shape than I am, he's faster on the draw! "Can we get along here? Can we all get along?"

Speaking of disasters, we had our own right here in southern California. The only real hot spots were within 30 or so miles from those reactors. Up here in Arrowhead, we didn't get that much to begin with, 50R/hr. Which should be obvious if the radiation level was down to 50mR after 14 days. Ten to the third power is 1,000 and 7 to the third power is 343 hours = 14 days. The CD V-715 that Seth had on in the shelter never even clicked.

Wednesday, July 25th...

We'd finished all of the chores, except for caring for the horses, on Tuesday. The thing about horses is that after they burn the hay, they dump it on the ground and one of us to clean it up. Seth pointed out a small patch he had set aside to put in a garden and suggested that we just dump it there and sort of spread it around. I wonder if he's planning on wearing those \$500 boots when he follows that rototiller around? Probably planning on the hired help to do it. If I get horse manure on my boots, does that make me a real cowboy? Yeah, I didn't think so. You know there is more than one definition:

1. A hired man, especially in the western United States, who tends cattle and performs many of his duties on horseback. Also called cowman, cowpoke, cowpuncher, also called regionally buckaroo, vaquero, waddy.
2. An adventurous hero.
3. Slang – A reckless person, such as a driver, pilot, or manager, who ignores potential risks.

Of course, it could refer to a football team, too.

Sure, I'm white. Didn't you hear me say, "God bless George Washington. God bless my mother." I mean, now what kind of Indian would say a fool thing like that? Yes, the "black" white men; I have heard of them. It is said that a "black" white man once became a Human Being. They are a very strange people. Not as ugly as the white man true; but they are just as crazy! Do you hate them? Do you hate the White man now?

Do you see this fine thing? Do you admire the humanity of it? Because the human beings, my son, they believe everything is alive. Not only man and animals. But also water, earth, stone. And also the things from them... like that hair. The man from whom this hair came, he's bald on the other side, because I now own his scalp! That is the way things are. But the white man, they believe EVERYTHING is dead. Stone, earth, animals. And people! Even their own people! If things keep trying to live, white man will rub them out. That is the difference.

I didn't say that. There are thousands of Indians down there. And when they get done with you, there won't be nothing left but a greasy stain. This ain't the Washite River, General, and them ain't helpless women and children waiting for you. They're Cheyenne brave, and Sioux. You go down there, General, if you've got the nerve.

This boy is no longer a boy. He's a brave. He is little in body, but his heart is big. His name shall be "Little Big Man."

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What day is it? Oh, I remember Wednesday July 25th. What did we have to do today? Feed and clean up after the horses. Not a big deal, maybe 30 minutes work. We did that early and washed up for breakfast. We'd used up the fresh eggs and nobody was really

ready to try the eggs in the cans. Unfortunately that one-year supply of food only contained a single #10 can of buttermilk pancake mix. The breakfast products were in boxes 8 and 10, which contained: 1 cornmeal, 1 pancake mix, 1 6-grain, 2 Quick Oats and 2 9-grain. The good news was that Rose and I liked pancakes and had 2 dozen 5-pound bags of Krusteaz Buttermilk Pancake Mix. It was instant and only required you to add water. Rose preferred to add an egg and use milk instead of water, which only served to make a richer pancake. Today, absent the eggs, she just used milk. I ate 3 plate-sized cakes. We also had 18 bottles of Aunt Jemima syrup.

“Good breakfast. What’s on the agenda today?”

“Security, Joe. I want Evan and you looking around the place and see what we might do to keep uninvited strangers out.”

“Ok but we’d be better off with a soldier or a Marine.”

“Maybe but we don’t have a soldier or Marine. Consider the likely approaches and what we’ll have to do to prevent someone from using them.”

“Mind if I ask a simple question?”

“Not at all, what do you want to know?”

“Why are you acting like this is World War 3? Hell, with the equipment we have, we could hold off a couple of Platoons.”

“Joe, we have 3 men and 3 women, all in their late forties or early fifties. None of us have any recent combat experience, if any. If I recall, both Evan and you retired after 20 around ‘95. That means you were in after Vietnam, and neither of you has said anything about the Gulf War.”

“We both missed that one.”

“Then you have training but no combat experience?”

“Yeah, if you put it that way, you’re right.”

“We have 4 sides just like any other lot. On the front side we have street access, but a sneaky guy might try to come in from the woods. Most of what I know comes from watching TV and movies. That said, we’re going to need fighting positions. I have access to a backhoe and a trencher and once you lay out what we need, I’ll get the guys to install it.”

“What guys?”

The guys with the trencher and backhoe.”

“Have you checked? Are they still around?”

“Damn right they are, both live within a block of here. I already talked to them and if I furnish the fuel and pay their going rate, they do whatever we want. Every time we get a good rain, I go to the fire station and pick up those free sandbags they pass out. There are several bundles in the garage.”

Evan and I walked the property several times and determined where we would position riflemen and the snipers. Right about now, I'd give my left arm up to the elbow for one Marine Gunny. The bottom line was if we were surrounded, we'd have no choice except to retreat to the shelter under the house and wait them out. I suggested mounting a CCTV camera on the antenna mast that could pan in a full circle, just in case. We also moved most of our things to the shelter so that in the event we were getting overrun we wouldn't lose a lot.

Evan suggested trenches connecting the fighting positions and we laid it out on paper. The following morning, the trencher and backhoe started working around 6am. Hell, by Friday they had everything dug. Meanwhile we were shoveling soil into the sandbags and piling them. Evan and I agreed that Seth was probably off his rocker because it wasn't like southern California was experiencing any serious unrest. One final trench was dug to allow us retreat to the house. That one got a lot of sandbags, because it was the most exposed. When we began to run low on sand bags, Seth and the women went looking. They hit every fire station in the area and brought back another gross (144) of bags.

“We're going to need more of those bags.”

“What are you doing, eating them?”

“You had 2 gross and picked up another gross. We just need enough more to shelter the area where the trench shallows out and come into the house. Do you want us to go?”

“We'll get them; the two of you keep shoveling and putting them in place.”

“I was afraid you were going to say that. Let's face it, Seth; if we get a large force that attacks your cabin, we're going to be out of luck.”

“Well I don't know where we could get more people or where we could put them up if we did.”

“Last Wednesday you sent away 18 people and at least 12 of them could have really helped.”

“What are you suggesting, rounding up the people I let go?”

“Why not? I doubt that most of them have electricity and are probably cooking their food on their gas grills. Since you have all of their addresses, why don’t you go look them up and see if they like to improve their situation?”

“And put them where?”

“Didn’t we leave some tents at the warehouse?”

“Oh right those GI surplus tents I bought and couldn’t sell.”

“Those are the ones. They had heaters and would each sleep up to 10-12 people so they wouldn’t necessarily be crowded if we put each of the 5 families in their own tent. They could eat in the house and use the bathroom facilities.”

“Seth, Joe is talking sense. That would give us 18 defenders if it came to that and if I recall, a couple of those kids looked to be in high school. Some of them must have weapons but even if they don’t you could outfit a small army.”

“Well, I do have some ALICE gear at the warehouse. Did you put in enough foxholes to provide a fighting position for everyone?”

“We put in four across the front and back and 8 down each side. Naomi said your lot was one lot wide and 2 deep.”

“Yeah that right it’s a double lot.”

“We’ll keep filling the sand bags and you see what you can do to get the things from the warehouse and line up the people.”

I could see the gear churning as Seth thought it over.

“Some of the guys have Garand rifles and I think that they’re all .30-06s.”

“And you don’t have any Garand ammo?”

“I have some because I have some Garand’s, but not a lot. Have any idea where we could get more?”

“Well that gal in Palmdale that runs High Desert Storm sells it. It’s Greek but it is mil spec and in the 8 round clips. I’m not sure but it may be packed around 192 rounds to the sealed can. I think that there are 8 bandoleers per can, but I’m not really sure.”

“Why don’t we send Marie and Rose to Palmdale and Naomi and I will go to the store. I’ll give them plenty of cash to buy all they can get. I guess I should have been better prepared and thinking ahead.”

“No harm, no foul. You’d better see about getting some plywood to put floor in those tents. It would keep them warmer come cold weather.”

“How much was that ammo?”

“I think she was getting \$80 a can.”

“Did she have a lot?”

“She did the last time I was there, but I have no idea if she has that much left.”

That was it, the girls headed up to the Antelope Valley and Seth and Naomi headed to Santa Clarita. I didn’t shop much at High Desert Storm but her prices were always good. That’s where I got some of my .45 Colt ammo and she had the cheapest price in the Valley. Evan and I filled sand bags until we ran out then broke for lunch. After lunch we got the garden cart out of the garage and started sandbagging the fighting holes. Around 3pm, Marie and Rose were back and they had 30 cans of the Garand ammo. I checked and it was dated in the mid ‘80 so it should be in good condition. We left the ammo in the Chevy and kept hauling sandbags until Seth and Naomi showed up.

“Well?”

“Well what? Oh, are they coming? Yes they’re coming in tomorrow. We’ll have to toss together some floors for the tents, but they can help erect them. How did the girls make out?”

“They got 30 cans. That 5,760 thousand rounds.”

“Good, I think we’re going to need it.”

“Yeah right, the Red Army is going to be rolling in any day.”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 8

“Don’t be flip. Have you ever heard the expression Aztlán Invasion? Or, of groups named Provisional Government of Aztlán or Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán?”

“Sound Mexican.”

“Bingo. Give the man a cigar. It’s a movement to reunite several of the southwestern states with México.”

“Where are they, México?”

“Most are located in the US.”

“Where did you hear this?”

“When I stopped by Jose and Teresa’s to see if they would come. She told me that Jose had been approached. Jose is a native Californian and wasn’t interested. Before he said no, he did pick up a few details. It seems that they’re being supplied by MS-13.”

“That’s a Salvadoran gang, right? Full name is Mara Salvatrucha? What do you mean they’re supplying the groups you mentioned?”

“Selling them guns and munitions, what did you think I meant?”

“Not good, Joe,” Evan suggested.

“Did you get us more sandbags?”

“Two gross. Let the fellas fill them tomorrow after they show up and get our little tent city erected.”

“We may have to run the second generator to supply them with electricity.”

“Don’t be silly, all they need is a single bulb in those tents. The thing is, they’ll be ok in the tents through August and into September, but when it gets colder, that will never do.”

“You have that back lot.”

“I was thinking of putting that into a garden, if necessary.”

“You don’t think it going to come to that do you? We know the military is functioning, they had Edwards locked down tight. Local agencies should have already started some clean up and FEMA should show up any day with their checkbook,” Evan commented.

Most of the foregoing conversation was between Seth and me with Evan adding the occasional thought. I figured that Evan had a point and he'd really pegged FEMA. California has more than its share of major earthquakes and usually all we'd ever see was a group of government representatives with forms to fill out to get low interest government loans. It wasn't like California wasn't used to having disasters. That Northridge quake had come shortly after I started working for Seth at Rim of the World. It was a tough commute for a year until they rebuilt the overpass where 14 jointed 5. That particular overpass came down in the Sylmar quake, was rebuilt, and came down again in the Northridge quake.

As a result of Loma Prieta and Northridge, they changed a lot of the building codes. I guess they had one too many highways collapse. Rose barely noticed Landers in Lancaster but those folks over in Victorville got quite the jolt. About like the jolt we got on the 4th of July when Osama and friends, well, that's never been established, decided to take out the nuclear power industry in the United States. To tell you the truth, I wouldn't minded making a run down to San Onofre or over to Diablo Canyon to see the extent of the damage, but they couldn't even get news crews in except by chopper using long range lenses.

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Power was being partially restored to greater Los Angeles. We didn't have any up in the mountains, but it was coming, or so they claimed. Not that it mattered with 2 generators and ~40k of propane. Around noon the next day, the fellas started to show up with their families. One of them had the company truck and it was carrying $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood and 2x6s. The tents were the 16' square military surplus artic tents. Seth had bought 6 to give them a try and never sold a single one. Not every business venture is a success, you know. It would take 8 sheets of plywood per to put in a floor. The wives and kids came into the house and made themselves comfortable while we threw together the floors. A pneumatic nailer would have been nice, but it didn't take that long, we only had to assemble 5. Then we put up the tents, added the stoves and folding cots and were ready to go.

"This will do for now and you will all be back on the payroll effective at 8am this morning. For those of you with the Garand rifles, you can draw a couple of cans of ammo from the basement. Those without weapons should see me and I'll equip you. I have a wide selection, but except for certain guns, I don't have more than 2 of anything. I have 4 more Garand's and for those who know how or can figure out how to use them, there is plenty of ammo. Naomi and I discussed it and she and I are going to use my two Super Match M1As and our Para Ordinance P-14 .45ACP pistols. Evan has a FAL and Marie has an AR15. Joe has quite the assortment, but mainly he and Rose use the HK91s and M1911s."

Seth continued, "I'd prefer that anyone ages 14 and up be trained in the use of firearms. I've heard some things that make me uneasy and with the supplies from the store, we have enough food for everyone for a couple of years. I moved the generator and pro-

pane tank from the store and we managed to get them topped off. In other words, we'll have electricity until Edison sees fit to restore power. As you know, the phones are still out, but I have radio equipment for communications and most of the media is still on the air. Not that they broadcast anything fit to listen to, but they're there. Joe suggested that we might want to erect some more permanent quarters on my back lot and I'm thinking that one over. Manny, you were in the Corps, what rank?"

"Staff Sergeant, Seth."

"I was hoping you were a Gunny."

"I wasn't but I know one."

"A lot of people know a Gunny, Manny."

"That's not what I mean, Seth. What I meant was that I know a Gunny who might be looking for a safe place to live."

I leaned over and nudged Evan and whispered, "There is a God!" Seth only hired veterans, why I have no idea. Maybe it made him feel safer. It had been an all-volunteer military when he came along and he hadn't raised his hand. In a way, I'm glad, he'd made a bundle out of the preparedness business and I had yet to find out just how well off Naomi and he were. Had to be a lot, have you priced those Surefire suppressors he bought by the dozen? What I couldn't understand was why Seth had touted the law by getting suppressors and those Barrett rifles and hadn't thought to buy a Ma Deuce. I mean, how much longer will you go to prison if you have a machinegun too?

"I'd like to meet this Gunny of yours, Manny," Seth went on, "Can you arrange it?"

"Sure, we'll take your Hummer, he'll be impressed."

"It's just a Hummer."

"Not, it's a H1 Alpha with all of the extras and a fording kit. I'll bet you even have an auxiliary fuel tank."

"I have everything they could bolt on, Manny."

Seth's Hummer was an open top, not a wagon and he brought a bright red vehicle. It had 2 onboard tanks carrying 51.5-gallons of fuel. It only gave him a cruising range of ~570 miles, but that could get us to Phoenix or San Francisco. Forget Phoenix, it clicks. According to TV reports Phoenix was the hardest hit area in the US as a result of the 4th of July attacks.

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Evan and I stayed at Lake Arrowhead trying to get the defenses in order while Seth and Manny hunted down Manny's friend, the Gunny. Except for the inconvenience of the power being out and the phones being down, I couldn't see that there was much to worry about. Seth was turning his cabin into an armed camp and it didn't really make a lot of sense. For crying out loud, the way I saw it, we'd been through the flu and it hadn't killed off the country like they feared. Then we had a pair of earthquakes, but that was nothing new in California. Situated where they were, even though the terrorists had succeeded in blowing up those 5 containment buildings and releasing a bunch of radioactivity, the worst problem from that was the loss of electricity.

Everyone knew about the near disaster at Three Mile Island and the people who lived in the area of those reactors knew to get the hell out of Dodge if anything went wrong. They were only suitcase nukes producing small craters and nobody lived next door to either reactor. According to the news, a few people had gotten a dose of radiation, but they were probably the people who thought that you didn't need to keep KIO_3 on your cupboard shelf. As far as any Aztlán Invasion went, have you seen the Mexican Army? We could hold them off with rocks! The government of México keeps an Army to give it a police force and nothing more. Taiwan could invade México successfully. It seems like most everybody has invaded México at one time or another.

You know what, I had my job back and Evan had a job and all we had to do was figure out how to defend a double lot in Lake Arrowhead with close to 20 people. This wasn't rocket science and Evan and I ended up agreeing to refer to the supposed threat as 'them'. Forget the ants – that was a different movie. It was made in 1954 and starred James Arness. I wasn't some wide-eyed survivalist who thought that the country would go to hell in a hand basket and FEMA would open detention camps just to try and convert us all to liberals. Chertoff couldn't organize a parade. If México invades, we'll send the LAPD and tell them to follow their normal 'weapons free' policy.

I kept my 2006 NRA Hunting calendar up showing the picture for December. Here's this guy sitting in a snow bank with a rifle across his lap. Standing behind him to his left is a Whitetail, with a massive rack, 4 or 5 points per side. The guy has his head wrapped in the hood of his orange parka and obviously can't see or hear the deer. That sort of reminds me of life, sometimes things are right under our nose and we can't see them. Late that afternoon, Seth and Manny returned, followed by a man, his wife and 2 kids in a Dodge ¾ ton club cab pickup pulling a travel trailer.

"Joe, I'd like you to meet Gunnery Sergeant Ramon Gonzales, a man with 24 years in the Corps."

"Call me Gunny. I'm here to teach you people how to Improvise. Adapt. Overcome."

"Say what? You've been watch too many movies, Gunny."

"Did you ever look at the credits closely? I was in it. You do remember the credits where they listed the actual Marines in Eastwood's movie don't you?"

“I liked the movie, actually.”

“Hell, it was a comedy. About the only thing they got right was Highway smoking the captured Cuban cigar. Any Gunnery Sergeant who fired off a weapon at any place other than a range would have been giving his walking papers. Recon platoons are not part of regiments or battalions. Recon platoons are part of the Division Headquarters. Recon platoons are made up of the best of the best and no recon platoon would have ever looked as sloppy as this one did in the beginning. Every Marine knows the Medal of Honor ribbon and every one seeing the Gunny with the ribbon would have immediately recognized that he was a Medal of Honor winner and would have immediately given him the highest respect, including the Major. As for the accidental firing on the shooting range, unlikely. By the time a Marine is selected for a recon platoon, he is already highly trained in weapons and he is not likely to make a boot camp mistake.”

“I liked it anyway,” I pointed out.

“Seth tells me that all of you men are veterans of at least one tour in the service and that you and you friend are retired Air Force Master Sergeants.”

“That’s right Gunny, E-7s the same as you were.”

“How long were you in?”

“20 years, each.”

“Fine I had 24. I guess that makes me top dog around here. I want you Air Force pukers to listen up and see if you can learn something about real fighting. Manny, could you spot my trailer?”

“Sure, Gunny.”

“Manny was only in about 8 years, but he’s probably forgotten more than either of you learned about combat in your entire careers.”

He turned to Evan and said, “You look fit. Are you sure you weren’t a Marine?”

POP! Gunny didn’t see it coming and was sitting on his ass on the ground. I’ve told you about Evan’s temper. What I didn’t tell you was that he didn’t care for Marines, some macho inter-service rivalry or something. Let me tell you, everyone gives the Air Force a hard time. I don’t see why, we were mainly technicians, not infantry soldiers. I was more than willing to give the infantry their due, but where in Heaven’s name would they be without Air Power?

The USAF was created in 1947 from the Army Air Corps. Later, the Army got into choppers in a big way and they still had an air branch. Marine Corps Aviation flew the AV-8B

Harrier, the F/A-18, the CH-46 and CH-53 helicopter plus the AH-1T Cobras and the MV-22A Osprey. The F-35B STOVL version of the Joint Strike Fighter hadn't been fielded, yet. Army Aviation centered, primarily, on the AH64 and AH-64D Apache, the UH-60 Blackhawk, the CH-47D Chinook and the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior. Naval Aviation was mainly centered on the F/A-18 Super Hornet, various helicopters and support aircraft. These guys weren't pilots – they were Naval Aviators. Some kind of mind set that made the Navy pilots think that their chit didn't stink. Tom Cruise did a lot to foster the bad image some people have of Navy pilots.

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I suppose that Evan had the advantage over Gunny because Gunny didn't expect some Air Force puke to punch him in the mouth. You've got to wonder about a man who put in 24 years and only made it to E-7. The Marines do that physical BS to get you in shape and all of the screaming and yelling to teach discipline. On the other hand, the Marine Corps only issue you ammo at the firing range and when you get to combat. Here we had 7 guys with varying amounts of time in the military representing the Corps, the Air Force and the Army. I can't tell why Seth didn't hire sailors. Ramon Gonzales didn't look like Gunny Highway, either. I do believe that when he saw everyone walking around with loaded guns, he concluded he'd need a different approach.

"Where can we take these people to get them up to speed on their weapons?" Gunny asked.

"Gunny, the nearest full range is Arrowhead Fish and Game. They have Bench Rest, Informal Shotgun Practice, Instructions, Outdoor Archery, Outdoor Handgun, Outdoor Rifle, Small Bore, Tournaments and Trap." Seth replied.

"I'll do any instructing that needs done," Gunny replied. "Drop your ***** and grab you socks, people, we're burning sunshine here."

"Gunny, half of you students are women and I'd appreciate it if you could tone it down a bit."

Personally, I think that Gunny watched *Heartbreak Ridge*, one time too many. This wasn't easy, but Rose and I got our HK91s, the M1A and the Tac-50 and loaded them in the Navigator. The weapons were sighted in already, but a little practice never hurt anyone. I did want to see what the sniper rifles and the HK91s would be like suppressed. I took the Tac-50 and my HK and Rose took the M1A and her HK. Surefire really did well on those suppressors; most of the sound now was the zing of the speeding bullet. It did change the striking point of the weapons, however. I guess the added barrel length raised it just a smidgen. I made a minor adjustment to my elevation and I was right on the money at 100-yards.

As far as I was concerned, most of the close up shooting would be with the HK and a 100-yards was just fine. I could always crank in a range adjustment, if needed. I moved

on to my 30-pound wonder, the Tac-50. It was scoped, as mentioned and I started off at 500-yards. I intended to finish at the same range, I wasn't a trained sniper and 500-yards was good shooting as far as I was concerned. The trigger released and the round went down range, right on target. Nice, the Tac-50 sounded more like the HK without its suppressor. A man wouldn't have a chance at 500-yards with the Tac-50, provided he wasn't moving. Nah, this rifle wasn't one of those pipsqueak rifles you could easily move around.

I'd done 6 magazines through the HK and 4 through the McMillan and I was more than satisfied that the sighting on the weapons was ok. Rose was just finishing up with the HK, she liked to take her time and place every shot. She switched to the M1A and I mentioned that she might have to adjust the elevation in the scope.

"Is that why the HK shot high?"

"Rose the suppressor lengthens the barrel; did you click down the elevation, a little?"

"I thought perhaps it had gotten bumped. But, you're right; it was shooting about one click high."

"Try adjusting the scope down one click before you shoot," I suggested.

She did and she was right on the money. She fired 10 rounds at 100, 10 at 200 and so forth until she was out to 500-yards. Her group was a bit larger at 500 than with the McMillan, but I could easily apply the same statement, a man wouldn't have a chance at 500-yards with the M1A, provided he wasn't moving. Evan had finished shooting his FAL and had put it up. He'd taken off his pistol and strapped on his Colt. Thereafter, he moved to the pistol range and was practicing his fast draw with live ammo. As people finished their shooting, Evan was beginning to draw a crowd. He had a silhouette set up at 15-yards and was consistently putting rounds into center mass using a fast draw.

"I see you didn't hurt your gun hand poking me in the jaw," Gunny remarked.

"I hit you with my left hand; I never use my right except to draw."

"Remind me not to piss you off again. You knocked me on my ass with your off-hand and it appears that if you get your other hand working, a man doesn't stand a chance."

"Gunny, I've been doing fast draw for years. In the beginning it was either draw fast or hit the target. Don't kid yourself, this takes a lot of practice."

"Can you draw a pistol like that?"

"Not really, no."

“Maybe you’d better carry the six-gun and keep your pistol as your backup. Joe, do Rose and you want to be our designated snipers?”

“Not really, we only shoot out to 500 yards. Ask Seth, he has the ultimate sniper’s rifle.”

“What do you have, Seth?”

“I think that what Joe is referring to is my pair of M107s.”

“Did you bring one?”

“I only have 90 practice rounds left; I didn’t want to waste them.”

“Where on earth did you get your hands on a pair of M107s? The M107 is supposed to be military only.”

“I got those from the same guy who supplied the suppressors.”

“I was going to ask, where did you get those?”

“From the guy who sold me the M107s.”

“In other words, you’d rather not say?”

“All of those things are NFA and you know the laws in California don’t permit you to own NFA firearms. So, I’d rather not say.”

“Do you have much of the .50 cal ammo?”

“90 practice rounds.”

“I know where to get the ammo, but I had no idea you had a weapon to use it in.”

“Have you ever shot a M107, Gunny?”

“Nah, that’s snipers only. I hear they have quite the kick.”

“I’ll tell you what, you come up with ammo and you can use one. If you’re good with it, you can be our designed sniper with the M107.”

I sort of hate to bring up the subject of ‘Boy Toys’ again, but you should have seen Gunny’s eyes light up. I later asked him what he had for weapons and wasn’t surprised to learn that he had a M1A Super Match and a Para Ordinance P-14. It had been an interesting session on the range. Everyone was up to speed on whatever rifle(s) they were using and I think Gunny developed a new respect for Evan.

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Monday, July 30, 2007...

Gunny had a few suggestions about our emplacements, but nothing much more than adding extra sandbags. He took off this morning in his pickup with Seth's blessing and I suspect a little of Seth's gold. I'm not sure where he went, but he was gone about 4 hours. When he got back he had 1,200 rounds of Hornady 750gr A-MAX Match and 10 cans of Mk 211. It was time to rock and roll and unless someone came against us with tanks, we should be able to defend the two stinking lots in Lake Arrowhead. Yes, I'm frustrated. Evan and I do most of the work and then the Gunny comes in and takes over. I was ready to go back to Lancaster, to be 100% honest.

Obviously when I said we were good against anything but a tank, I excluded Air Power. Storming Norman made the whole world aware of how devastating Air Power could be. And that was before they improved the bombs so they hit what they were aimed at! I know you're getting bored, because you want action, right? It's only July 30th, 26 days after they hit those reactors. People probably still have food in their cupboards. Seth says trouble is coming and he hired the Gunny so we would be safe. We might be if Gunny learns to hit anything with the M107.

Evan and I decided to go to an ATM and check and see if our retirement checks hit. Yes, the banks were working, the feds made sure; they couldn't live without those withholding deposits. Hallelujah, they were there. We went into the bank and filled out withdrawal slips. Evan nearly emptied his account because Marie and he were on a cash basis. I took half and left the rest for the automatic deducts to hit. Rose had taken care of the mortgage payment so I didn't worry about that. How do I know how she did it? Maybe she took the cash and bought a money order, ask her.

I'm sure things are different in Phoenix, because they don't average several earthquakes a day and several a year over M_w 5. That lady Governor they had was something else. She sort reminded me of the gal governing Louisiana. She seemed to think that everything was the Republicans' fault, too. Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano is single; Blanco is married and has 6 kids and 7 grandchildren.

The law of unintended consequences, often cited but rarely defined, is that actions of people – and especially of government – always have effects that are unanticipated or “unintended.” Economists and other social scientists have heeded its power for centuries; for just as long, politicians and popular opinion have largely ignored it. In the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, many coastal states enacted laws placing unlimited liability on tanker operators. As a result the Royal Dutch/Shell group, one of the world's biggest oil companies, began hiring independent ships to deliver oil to the United States instead of using its own forty-six-tanker fleet. Oil specialists fretted that other reputable shippers would flee as well, rather than face such unquantifiable risk, leaving the field to fly-by-night tanker operators with leaky ships and iffy insurance. Thus, the probability of

spills will increase and the likelihood of collecting damages will decrease as a consequence of the new laws.

I read that term, unintended consequences, somewhere and wondered what the author was referring to. Mostly it is an economic thing so I made a note of where I read it, intending to go back and read further. Then we had the 4th of July and the Internet went down. How much had the War on Terror cost? Who knows, a lot? Then there was Katrina with its \$200 billion price tag. Nobody was speculating in the media how much it would cost to replace the generating capacity we lost when the 3 facilities were blown up and the other 17 forced to close for inspection and possible repairs.

Possibly that was what Seth was thinking of preparing the cabin for an invasion. I didn't think it would be the Mexicans', but MS-13 had gotten bold and had a face-off with LAPD. The loss of life had ended up about even and it hadn't been good. Losing a single police officer was a time of anguish for many, but 9 officers? It was right out of the pages of history with the North Hollywood Shootout when 2 guys robbed Bank of America. They had vests and AK-47s loaded with armor-piercing ammo. 7 civilians and 11 police officers were injured.

The run in between MS-13 and the LAPD happened in the Wilshire district on July 19th, the day after we came out of the shelter. Seth had been enthralled by the broadcast and then he'd visited with Jose. After that, he'd been talking about the Mexican Invasion. Evan and I had thought that the Gunny was the answer to our prayers, but for a while, he seemed to be our worst nightmare. Once Evan and he got things sorted out, it was better, which as you know is a term of relativity.

MS-13 was the real deal. They'd started in LA and had branched out. Although founded among immigrants in the United States, Mara Salvatrucha now has a large presence in El Salvador. Much of this is due to the US policy of deporting convicted criminals back to their country of origin. Back in El Salvador, these deportees have recruited more members, including new members who immigrate illegally to the United States.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 9

The age of a Mara Salvatrucha member can range from 11 to 50. The gangs have moved from beyond their Salvadoran and Los Angeles origins and can be found now in Honduras, Guatemala, Canada, México, and over 30 US states, especially on Long Island and around Washington, DC in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs. Some sets have been founded in Spain, Italy, even Belgium; it has been said the gang even has an alliance with La Cosa Nostra. Many Mara Salvatrucha members are former members of death squads set up by the Salvadoran government and supported by the United States government in the 1970s and 1980s. Members of these groups have training in fire-arms, explosives and booby traps. There is no centralization or hierarchy among the gang from different regions, although a 2004 report by the US National Drug intelligence Center says chapters of Mara Salvatrucha in different areas may be trying to set up a coordinated network. In 2005, police in Maryland and Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC, noticed an increase in the presence of the gang, including incidents of gang-related stabbings and other violence.

When it first began in the US, Mara Salvatrucha only allowed Salvadorans as members but today the gang now includes members from other Latin American countries. Mara Salvatrucha also has some non-Latino black members. Members are strongly encouraged to have tattoos to express their allegiance to Mara Salvatrucha. Those who join are expected to remain members for life, and anyone who leaves the gang is placed under sentence of death.

They no more cared if they killed 9 cops or 90. They were out of their area, fighting cops in the Wilshire District. Most of the Salvadorian refugees settled in the established Hispanic neighborhoods of the Rampart area of Los Angeles. Mara Salvatrucha gang members maintain contact between groups in the United States and El Salvador for several specific reasons. In El Salvador, a hand grenade sells for \$1-\$2 US currency and an M-16 rifle will sell for approximately \$200-\$220 US dollars. This communication and alliance provides a mechanism for MS gang members to access military-style munitions and also establishes a network to traffic illegal firearms into the United States. In the US, the gang could get the one thing unavailable in El Salvador, handguns.

After the North Hollywood Shootout, the cops in California were better armed. However, their M16s had the guts removed so they could only be fired as semi-automatic rifles. The only time a person needed full auto or 3-round burst was in the type of situation those LA cops found themselves in going up against MS-13. LAPD officers wore vests routinely so that meant that MS-13 was using something that could penetrate 8 or 9 layers of Kevlar. They were either using M855 NATO Ball (SS109) or the newer M995 AP.

.223/5.56 M855 green tip ammo - 62 grain, Lake City with steel penetrator – packed in stripper clips (10 rounds each – 120 rounds in bandoleers with guides – bandoleers in cans (840 rounds per can) – 2 cans per military crate – Only \$489 a crate or \$2,400 for 5 crates (8,400 rounds), shipping included, contact Eric the Ammoman. That's only 28.6¢ a round. Limited quantities. It was cheaper if you picked it up in New Jersey. Eric

probably didn't sell that ammo, but it was just that easy to pick up ammo for those M16s M-13 used. My only gripe was they had hand grenades and we didn't.

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That was the hype. Seth was spooked but was it a Mexican Invasion or MS-13? I can tell you one thing; the bills for the government were mounting up. We occasionally passed by the Ultramar station and he still had gas, for \$4.999 a gallon, gold or silver only. Come to think of it, what were we in the aftermath of? The flu, the earthquakes, the terrorist attacks or something else? If you ask me, we were in the aftermath of the environmentalists. You couldn't cut the wood because of some darned owls. You couldn't pump the oil because it would spoil the scenery. You couldn't burn the coal because it contained sulfur. If the US hadn't been forced to resort to nuclear fuels, the terrorists wouldn't have had a target to strike that would have done that damage to a place like Phoenix.

The United States is the world's largest supplier of commercial nuclear power. In 2005, there are 104 US commercial nuclear generating units that are fully licensed to operate. (Note: One reactor, however, Brown's Ferry unit 1 has been shut down since 1985. Therefore, some sources cite only 103 units.) Together, they provide about 20 percent of the Nation's electricity. When you take 20 of those reactors offline, you lose 20% of your nuclear electrical generating capacity. The problem is that the US was already walking a fine line and California was importing energy.

"Have you heard when the lights will be back on, Joe?"

"Sorry, Gunny, I haven't heard a word about Lake Arrowhead. They have partially restored power in LA, but that's the DWP. Here in Arrowhead they get our utilities from SoCal Edison and SoCal Gas."

"Where are you from, Joe?"

"Rose and I live in Lancaster."

"What are you doing here?"

"I worked for Seth at Rim of the World Preparedness. We had a shelter in Lancaster, but Seth put the other employees in it and Evan, Marie, Rose and I joined Naomi and Seth here. He decided to close the company because of the terrorist attacks. Evan got locked out at Edwards and we ended up staying here working for Seth as guards."

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More news from 2005...

Méxican President Vicente Fox denounced as “disgraceful and shameful” on Wednesday a proposal to build a high-tech wall on the US-México border to stop illegal immigrants.

Concerned about the huge numbers of illegal immigrants streaming across the border and worried it could be an entry point for terrorists; a US lawmaker has proposed building two parallel steel and wire fences running from the Gulf of México to the Pacific Coast. But Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has said a wall running the length of a border would cost too much.

México has expressed indignation at the idea.

Fox, speaking in Tamaulipas state across the border from Texas, said such extreme security measures would violate immigrants’ rights.

“The disgraceful and shameful construction of walls, the increasing enforcement of security systems and increasing violation of human rights and labor rights will not protect the economy of the United States,” he said.

And then, there was this:

“Iran’s a real threat,” Bush told Fox News in an interview in which he repeated his charge that Iran was part of an “axis of evil” along with North Korea and prewar Iraq. “I called it part of the ‘axis of evil’ for a reason,” Bush said. Wake up and smell the roses, George, the Israelis will solve that problem. Patience grasshopper.

Now maybe that was what Seth was worried about. Nah, not unless the Méxican Army gets help from the Chinese. Say, didn’t one of those other authors suggest something like that? What did she say, Chinese soldiers at the Méxican border, or something? Apparently, Congress disagreed with Chertoff because they funded the project to begin during FY 2006. For what we were spending on Border Patrol Agents and their less than spectacular success, it only made sense.

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“He pay good?”

“Seth?”

“What did you do space out for a minute?”

“I had a couple of stray thoughts, sorry, Gunny. Does Seth pay well? It depends, on your job. He basically pays going rate for the industry. Because I was the Assistance Manager, I did better than most. He also offered to pay Evan the same as I get paid, because of our similar backgrounds. More recently, the business really picked up. It was a combination of the avian flu scare and the 2 earthquakes we had. I have to believe

that the Israelis bombing the Iranian reactors had a bearing on it too. When we were forced to shut down, we were sitting on orders for 9 more shelters. Maybe when things settle down a bit, Seth may go ahead and try to fill those orders. We make a fair amount on those, you know. We only sell one size, the 10' culvert 50' long. We add several upgrades including a real toilet, black water tank, a fresh water tank and a kitchenette. We licensed the basic design from USS in Salt Lake because they couldn't supply shelters to meet our demand."

"What kind of stray thoughts did you have?"

"The first pertained to the new wall they're building to prevent the illegal immigration of Mexican residents. The second was about Iran and the Bush statement a couple of years back that Iran was a real threat. What did you do in the Corps?"

"I was in special ops."

"Force Recon?"

"For most of my career. You'd have known if you have seen me in my dress blues."

"Best of the best?"

"For the Corps at least. There are the Army Special Forces and the Navy has the SEALs. Special Ops is sort of a community where the inter-service rivalry isn't quite as bad."

"I've been thinking about MS-13 and that shootout they had with LAPD in the Wilshire District. Those SOB's have M16s and hand grenades."

"We don't?"

"We don't have any automatic weapons and the only explosives we have are the Mk 211 ammo."

"Why didn't someone say something? I could have picked up grenades. The only time you'd want an automatic weapon would be if you were heavily outnumbered and had to lay down heavy fire."

"I understand that, Gunny, but some of those M67s would have been nice."

"Make me a list of what you think we should have and I'll see what I can do."

"Me? I was a technician, what do I know about what an Infantry unit should have?"

“You seem to know your weapons, Joe. You have two good Assault Rifles and a couple of fine sniper weapons. I’m not sure those Kimbers are worth what they cost, but they’re basically M1911s.”

“I noticed that you favor the M1A.”

“I do, but there are times when an M16 is the weapon of choice. The Para P-14 is nothing more than a high capacity M1911.”

“Did Seth give you any idea what he’s worried about, Gunny?”

“Not really. I think maybe he’s read one too many of those stories about the end of the world or civilization. I almost passed but Jose seemed to think that you folks could have trouble because you’re well prepared and have enough of everything.”

“Seth has said more than once that he was in the business and if he didn’t epitomize the truly well prepared individual, no one did.”

“He has a fortune tied up in his preparations,” Gunny observed.

“True and he got most of it at cost.”

“Good business selling preparedness supplies?”

“It goes in spurts. A local M_w 5 earthquake usually triggers a good month and depending on the aftershocks, maybe a second.”

“Did you bring the entire inventory here?”

“We tried to bring everything we could use. Seth owns the building and it’s very secure so the things we couldn’t use are still there.”

“Did Evan and you give any thought to a guard schedule?”

“Gunny, we didn’t have time. We laid out the trenches and fighting positions and Seth had a neighbor cut them in. We were busy using the soil to fill sandbags and hadn’t finished when all of the others showed up. That’s why the sandbags weren’t as good as they could have been. Everything is happening so fast in terms of our preparing for WW III and yet nothing is happening.”

“It could be the lull before the storm, you know.”

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Thursday August 2, 2007...

“That’s it, hand grenades?” Gunny asked.

“It’s all that I could think of.”

“Weren’t you paying attention when I discussed the occasional need for automatic weapons?”

“I heard you Gunny, but I didn’t put them on the list because I didn’t think you could get them.”

“I’ll tell what I think we need,” Gunny continued. “We could use some of M16A3s with M203s attached, a couple of M240Bs and maybe a Ma Deuce.”

“The A3 is full auto?”

“Right, same as the A1.”

“No SAWs?”

“They work just fine until you need to depend on them. If we’re going to go with machineguns, I’d prefer the 7.62.”

“Will you need help?”

“Probably, but I’ll get it on the other end. The people I’m dealing with can get hinky. I know most people think that things like this only happen in Hollywood, but that’s not always the case. As long as I keep the quantities we need small, I think I can do business. If not, I’ve had a nice drive and visited with some old friends.”

“You want Evan and me to work on the guard details while you’re gone?”

“Already done, Joe, check with Seth.”

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“What’s up?” Evan asked.

“Gunny took off to get automatic weapons and grenades. He put together a guard schedule and said that we should check with Seth.”

“Nice morning. I like it up here; it’s a lot cooler than the Valley.”

Which Valley, ours or the one to the south?”

“High Desert, Low Desert, same difference, except Palm Springs usually has higher reported temperatures. It must be 20° cooler up here.”

“Seth told me that in the summer it is about 20° cooler than the Valley floor with summer highs generally in the 80’s. In the winter, night time temperatures regularly dip below freezing but are usually above freezing by 9am with an average winter high in the 50’s. Average rainfall is 40 inches a year, which is 3 to 4 times the typical rainfall in the Southern California area. Average snowfall is 80 inches a year starting in late November and ending in March.”

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Evan and I checked the schedule Gunny had prepared and Evan had 1st shift, I had graveyard and Gunny 2nd. The 3 of us would be team leaders for teams of 6 people. I noticed that Gunny put Jose on my team, probably to keep me out of trouble. Another thing I noticed was that none of the teams included any couples and the women were always paired off together. Each team had one designated sniper, Gunny, Rose or me. Seth and Naomi weren’t on the schedule. Being I had graveyard, I installed my night vision scope on the Tac-50.

You know, having a rifle like the Tac-50 was an expensive proposition. First came the rifle, then the day scope and finally the night vision. After that came the ammo at a considerable price, about a grand a case 200 rounds. It wasn’t something that you went to the range and burned off 200 rounds just for the fun of it, not at nearly \$5 a round. Evan went to the range with me while I check the zero on the scope. But, I’m getting ahead of myself.

Around 4pm, Gunny pulled in and his pickup was loaded.

“We thought maybe you got lost.”

“You try to talk a friend into providing you 20 M16A3s, a couple of M240Bs and a Ma Deuce. Hell, after you get him to agree, you have to start all over and discuss munitions and the grenades. He wanted to pawn of some of those worn out M249s, but I held out until I got what I wanted.”

“Worn out?”

“The Corps had worn out all of its SAWs by early in Iraqi Freedom. Some of the Marines were holding them together with duct tape. I couldn’t get the A3s and had to settle for the A4s. And, I only got 9 of the M203s, but I did get 2 cases of 40mm grenades per. The rifles are used, but they’ve been through a depot rebuild. You know the normal squad has 3 of the SAWs and they get used a lot. The M67s were about what you’d pay for them on the street in El Salvador. The M240Bs and the Ma Deuce are new. Most of the belted .50 cal is ball/tracer, but I did get a few boxes of AP/APIT. I also got something for our .50 caliber riflemen.”

“Oh, what?”

“You heard of the Mk 211 (Mk211) .50-caliber multipurpose anti-materiel round, manufactured by Raufoss? Damned lethal on a vehicle. You load up a couple of your spare magazines with that. You can take it to the range and check the sighting on your scopes, there’s plenty. All of the 7.62 belted is standard ball/tracer but I have enough to fight a few battles.”

“We only have 6 person teams, Gunny. If we put 2 people on the Ma Deuce, one of each of the M240s and have 3 grenadiers, we’re going to be short of people. You didn’t plan this very well.”

“You make do with what you have, Airdale. There are 7 on a squad when you include the Squad leader. The grenadiers have M16s with M203s attached and they’ll just have to do double duty.”

“Right, but the way I read your schedule 2 of the 3 Squad Leaders are designated snipers.”

“The second man on the .50 can be a Grenadier. Listen, I can’t plant seeds and grow people, especially not people who can use a weapon with any particular level of skill. Maybe Seth can talk to some of his neighbors and we can get them to pitch in.”

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Combat has frequently been described as hours of sheer boredom interspersed with a few moments of terror, or something like that. I know that you’re anxious for the action to begin, but if it were my choice, that wouldn’t happen. Could it be that the SAWs were better than I’d heard? If Marines could keep them together with duct tape and they still functioned, a person has to wonder. Gunny visited with Seth and it was decided to install a pintle mount on the Hummer, Gunny had that and the M3 tripod, and try and make the Ma Deuce a one-person operation. That shiny red Hummer had a ragtop, you know. I had a picture of one speeding across the desert just like Seth’s on my computer as wallpaper.

We were out early getting ready for whatever was coming our way. Gunny wasn’t half bad once you got to know him. And, when it came to connections, he apparently had some. You’ve probably been keeping track of what we’re armed with, right? We had everything from 9mm handguns all the way up to and including a M107, with plenty of ammo. We had my .50 caliber rifle, a .50 caliber machinegun, several 7.62 caliber rifles and 2 machineguns of the same caliber. On top of that, we had 40mm grenades and some hand grenades. If those people in Sacramento only knew, they’d be filling their drawers. Where is FEMA?

Hey, on second thought, maybe we’re better off not knowing. We don’t have any damage and don’t need any of the federal doles, so hopefully, they’ll stay lost. As a whole, the state of California is so out of step with the remainder of the nation that the feds fre-

quently have to threaten to withhold funds just to get minimal compliance. I know, they probably stopped in Arizona on the way and they are busy trying to decontaminate Phoenix. That's what it amounts to because Palo Verde is about 50 miles west of Phoenix.

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"I left snacks in the refrigerator if you get hungry during the night."

"Thanks Rose, but if I eat, I'll get sleepy. I keep the coffee going though. Has anyone said anything to you about putting in some more permanent quarters for the fellas and their families?"

"Naomi said that Seth was considering putting in a pole building."

"Where, on the back lot?"

"Apparently."

"I seriously doubt that the city of Lake Arrowhead would give him a permit to erect a pole building in a residential area. I realize that we've been through a lot in the past 6 months. Somehow I can't believe that things are as bad as Seth seems to think they are. I'll have breakfast for you when you come in."

"Ok, honey. Hey, let's be careful out there. Seth could always be right."

"Hills Street Blues?" I wondered. I'd heard that before.

"Did you get everyone positioned, Jose?"

"Weapons are manned and ready, Joe."

"What did you give people for a load out?"

"Everyone has a M16 with 7 mags, a main battle rifle with 7 mags, 4 hand grenades and their pistols. The people with the M203 have 36 rounds of 40mm. What do you have, a pistol and your McMillan rifle?"

"I'm the designated sniper this shift. There's an urn of coffee on in the kitchen and snacks in the refrigerator. What a waste of time."

"You don't agree with Seth?"

"It's not that so much as it all seems unreal. New Orleans will eventually be rebuilt and Phoenix cleaned up. It will take a while, but things should get back to normal. The only concern I have is the way prices have gone up in that last 30 days. Katrina took out the

Gulf Coast refineries and some of the platforms and I can understand a temporary price increase to over \$3 a gallon. Taking out 3 reactors and damaging 17 others only eliminated about 4-5% of our total electrical supply and did nothing to reduce the available petroleum products. Gas is \$5 a gallon.” I complained.

“The entire California grid is out except for residential electricity that some locales have restored. The refineries use lots of electricity for processing. You know the priorities; residential gets preference. Arizona can’t help because Palo Verde is gone. Biggest nuclear generating plant in the US, you know. It generates about 27% of their electricity.”

“Give me the night vision goggles, Jose, I think there’s a vehicle down the road.”

“Que? I don’t have them.”

“Crap, I’ll use the scope.”

“What do you have?”

“A van about 400-yards out. It doesn’t have headlights and is barely creeping.”

Jose grabbed the Kenwood 2-meter handheld and said, “Heads up everyone, we have a vehicle.”

“What do you see, Joe?”

“I can’t make anything out, it’s so dark. Wait I see a cigarette on the passenger side. I can make out the driver and one passenger,” I told him.

“Can you put a round right between the two of them?”

PFUTT. The side door of the van opened and several people boiled out as the tires screeched. The passenger and driver joined their companions. They opened fire on us and we reacted immediately. The .50 opened up on the van, cutting it to pieces while the two people with the 7.62 machineguns directed their fire to the group of people. I moved the rifle to a person who looked like he/she had a M16, I couldn’t really tell. PFUTT. I noticed someone rear back and throw something, probably a grenade, but only Superman could throw a grenade THAT far. I’d grabbed the wrong magazine, I thought I had the Raufoss, but I had the Hornady ammo.

“Jose, they have grenades,” I said about a second before it exploded. I could hear a siren in the distance; I guess we must have awakened someone.